*Gotta' Spank Fast!*

*A Mega Collection of Unofficial Parody Spanking Stories*

*For Furries and Gamers*

By Yu May

# Preface

The following is an unofficial work of parody, collecting short stories satirizing various anthropomorphic "furry" characters. Any characters referenced or alluded to remain the intellectual property of their respective owners. Any references or allusions to existing characters or intellectual properties are made expressly for the purpose of parody and artistic critique.

These stories prominently feature the use of corporal punishment for narrative purposes, in both comedic and dramatic contexts. This work is not intended for children, and reader discretion is advised. Some scenes depict the spanking of a minor, usually in the context of platonic, loving discipline from a parental or guardian figure. These scenes are only intended to serve the world and narrative. Nothing in this work should be interpreted as an endorsement of the actions depicted.

One short story, *Bobo Billby Gets a Whuppin' on Her Wumpas*, takes place in a different setting and universe than the other stories, but it seemed to fit the theme of the collection so well, I chose to include it as a bonus.

Many of these stories began when I started writing in 2023, at which point I was experimenting with AI language-learning models such as ChatGPT to help me write stories. Around 2024, I ceased relying on

AI as part of my creative writing process, and began writing my original stories from scratch.

When I revisited the older stories, I chose to make extensive edits to the chapters which began as an AI language-learning model chats. The goal was to make them more original, detailed, and interesting, and also to bring them up to my current standards as a writer.

I want to thank all those who have provided me with both support and constructive criticism in my journey to become a creative writer.

And finally, spank you so much for reading my book!

– Yu May

# *Sonar the Needle-mouse Spanks Taylor the Kitsune:*

Or:

## *A Red Tail for Taylor*

Once upon a time in the lush, rolling plains of Green Hills, Taylor the Kitsune and Sonar the Needle-mouse were sprinting through the serene environment, chasing the ever-elusive sense of adventure.

It had only been a week since Sonar had stumbled across young Kyrie “Taylor” Metre hiding from Dr. Mechanik’s army in the woods of Christmas Island. Without his parents to protect him, the young fox had quickly latched onto Sonar, and ever since Sonar had teasingly given Kyrie the nickname “Taylor,” the young fox cub had refused to answer to his real name ever since.

Now, they were a dynamic duo, the blue blur and his trusty, two-tailed tag-along.

"Look, Sonar!" Taylor exclaimed, pointing ahead, "Walrusman's robots at twelve o’clock!"

“Nah! It’s only seven-thirty!”

In the distance, they could see a cluster of Walrusman's mechanical minions, their metallic bodies gleaming in the sunlight. Sonar smirked, without missing a beat. "Let's show 'em what we've got, Taylor!"

With a burst of energy, Sonar leaped into the fray, spinning into a supersonic ball and smashing through a robo-caterpiller and crab-bot with ease. Taylor, eager to prove his worth, jumped in as well, but two of the robots were quick to focus their attacks on the young fox.

Taylor cut through the first robo-beetle with a spinning hook kick, followed by using his two tails to pull a mid-air helicopter maneuver and buzz-saw through the second foe, a flying robo-bee.

“Sonar!” squeaked Taylor, his voice cracking. Taylor coughed and tried to deepen his voice to sound more macho. “Did you see that? I got two at once!”

Sonar had indeed been watching, and wiped a bead of sweat from his brow.

Impressed to see how Taylor had handled himself, Sonar flashed him a thumbs up. “Good one, bro! Hold back while I scout the next cliff!”

As Sonar kicked up a dust cloud and darted off at top speed, Taylor choked and sneezed. “Sonar? Wait! I want to come too!”

Taylor took flight into the air, desperately trying to catch up to Sonar as he crossed a rope bridge at top speed.

But Sonar was too far ahead to notice, and his mind was occupied. Sonar still wasn’t sure how comfortable he was letting a little kid tag along on a dangerous adventure, but he didn’t see what else he could do until they could make their way back to Knothole Village and look for Taylor's parents amongst the refugees from Christmas Island.

Then, a lot of things happened in quick succession. Sonar looked below, and spotted a shark-like Gnasher-bot leaping from the river below him, sharp teeth bared.

Knowing he had to think fast, Sonar dug deep and thrust ahead at top speed, darting across the bridge before the Gnasher could bite him.

Sonar turned to stick his tongue out at the Robo-Baddie, only to see Taylor, oblivious to the danger, swooping down towards the bridge calling out, “Sonar!” The unsuspecting fox was heading right into the path of the rising beast!

Sonar slammed on the brakes, and leapt at the monster with a spin jump, just as it ripped through the bridge from below. An instant before the monstrous Gnasher could swallow Taylor, Sonar smashed straight through the enemy with such force, he actually bumped into Taylor in mid-air.

As broken pieces of the bridge and robot tumbled into the river below, Taylor yelped and snatched at Sonar's wrists, and struggled to carry Sonar's weight across the abyss.

Just as Taylor thought his arms would give out, Sonar managed to gain a single foot hold and leapt forward, carrying Taylor up and away from the steep drop.

The two lay gasping for air, Taylor from sheer terror, Sonar from pure exhilaration. His sides still in stitches from silent laughter, Sonar leapt up and ran a figure eight pattern. "Ha ha! Whoo! That was radical!"

As the adrenaline-rush of the moment faded, Sonar remembered Taylor. "Taylor? What were you following me for? I said I was just gonna' scout ahead and be right back!"

Still trying to catch his breath, Taylor poked his head over the cliff, curious to see how steep the drop really was. One peek down the chasm was more than enough. Taylor recoiled and crawled away

from the cliff edge, not even wanting to risk standing up. “Didn’t you hear me? I said I wanted to come with you!”

“Sorry, buddy! Guess I couldn’t hear you when I was kicking it into second gear!” Sonar considered what had just happened. A single moment of carelessness had nearly killed his self-appointed sidekick. Sonar had been in tough situations before, and knew what it was like to have innocent people counting on him, but this was different.

Taylor wasn’t helpless, but he just didn’t have Sonar’s speed.

To his horror, Sonar realized he was going to have to... slow down!

Sonar tapped his foot, annoyed at himself. Taylor saw the gesture, and wondered if he was the cause of Sonar’s bad mood. “I’m sorry, Sonar! I’ll do better!”

Still chewing himself out, Sonar snapped out of his musing. “Do better? You just saved my life! You did great! ... But do me a favor. Next time I tell you to wait for me while I scout ahead, hold position ‘til I get back. That way I know where you are.”

Taylor bowed his head. “But I want to help you fight! You know I can handle myself!”

“Of course you can, and of course I do!” Sonar waved a finger casually. For Sonar it was another hyperactive, nervous tic,

something he rarely noticed he did. But Taylor only saw it as finger-wagging. “But I can get in and out more quickly if there’s a trap ahead.”

The fox glowered, snapping his head up to fix Sonar with a stubborn pout. This was just like how Mom and Dad treated him at home. Didn’t Sonar know he wasn’t a little kid anymore?

Taylor wanted to stomp his foot and shout as much, but before he could throw a proper tantrum to prove how mature he was for his age, Sonar slapped his shoulder. “You’re my partner! I need Kyrie ‘Taylor’ Metre on my six in case big-butt-nik tries to sneak up on me from behind... Hopefully he doesn’t sit on me!”

Taylor cracked up at the thought, his foul mood forgotten. “Why would he do that? Wouldn’t he use one of his big weapons?”

“Have you seen that egghead’s behind? It *is* his biggest weapon! ... So, do I have your word? What I say goes?”

Taylor fought down his laughter (with mixed success), and saluted. “Aye, aye! Sonar!”

Laughing, Sonar and Taylor high-fived. Sonar put an arm around Taylor and walked with him a few steps, before slowly raising his eyes to the horizon with a sly smirk. “Way past cool! Now... try to keep up!”

With that, Sonar burst into second gear and rocketed toward the horizon. Taylor let out a little whine of surprise, before using his two tails to propel through the air, determined to tag along.

This time, Sonar ran *just* fast enough to give Taylor a workout.

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They traveled across the plains without incident.

Though he was relieved for Taylor's sake, Sonar couldn't help but find the lack of action boring.

"It's quiet..." Taylor called out from the sky.

Sonar simply couldn't resist adding, "... Too quiet!"

Taylor pointed to what looked like a shimmering cloud of gold in the distance. "You see that swarm of robo-bees on the horizon? They've been traveling in the same direction we have all afternoon!"

"Have they, now? Good catch, Taylor! Sounds like a scouting party... I don't like it!"

Sonar slammed on the breaks, and immediately started tapping his foot as he considered their surroundings. They had just passed out

of the wooded canopy of Green Hills into a wide open valley, with neither trees nor slopes for cover. A few moss-covered floating platforms hovered invitingly across the valley, ancient relics of an older civilization the local animals knew little about.

The first time Sonar had taken on Dr. Ivan Julius "Walrusman" Mechanik, the egg-headed egomaniac had thrown swarm after swarm of robots across the Land of the Sky indiscriminately. If Walrusman had learned anything from his first defeat, he'd be deploying his robots more tactically... like having them tail Sonar for instance.

"Taylor, I need you to hold back. Something about this valley smells like rotten eggs."

"But, Sonar!"

"No buts, little buddy! Use your flight to keep an eye on that swarm from the trees. If you see them move in your direction, head back into the forest!"

Taylor folded his arms petulantly. "You just want me to hide? I'm not a baby! What if they attack you! I should go along!"

"No, Taylor. Think about it. Your helicopter flight is most useful when you have some vertical terrain to work with. I'm going to blast around this valley at top speed and..."

Not wanting Taylor to feel left out, Sonar carefully avoided mentioning his suspicions of a trap. "... look for the best route. Then I'll come straight back."

With a flash of inspiration, Sonar snapped his fingers. "Of course, if you spot those buzzers flying towards me, I need you here to be my lookout! Let's have a signal... say a möbius strip!" Sonar ran a figure eight pattern. "Think you could fly in tight circles like that?"

Taylor's ears perked up. "You bet I can! Okay, I'll keep watch!"

"Atta'boy, Taylor! And remember, this is an important job. Whatever you do, don't abandon your cover in the woods, even if you see them heading for me. Just send me the warning signal, and I'll come back to find you... Do *not* come after me into the valley. Can I count on you to do that?"

Only half-listening, Taylor nodded his head furiously. "Uh-huh! I won't let you down!"

Satisfied, Sonar flashed a wink and lifted a foot to wind up for a sprint. "Good, I'm counting on you! Then let's do it, to it!"

With an explosion of energy, Sonar became a red and blue lightning bolt ripping across the empty valley, hopping along platforms. It took a whole five seconds for him to cross the valley on the first pass,

at which point he had built up to his third gear speed, letting him cross the valley again at a new angle in only three seconds. Trailing wide arcs, Sonar hopped onto floating platforms and covered a large swatch, waiting to trigger a trap or spot an enemy.

Just as Sonar was beginning to wonder if he was being paranoid, he spotted a small, yellow-orange speck flying figure-eights near the woods. Taylor had spotted something?

Sonar glanced north. The bee scouts weren't charging? Then he heard a rumbling explosion from behind him. A whining drill emerged from beneath the ground, sending chunks of dirt flying past Sonar's head. Of course, it was Dr. Mechanik, in one of his dorky machines.

Walrusman's walrus mustache twitched as he hooted with laughter. "Hello, Sonar! I'd ask you to surrender, but I think we both know the drill! Now, prepare to... BAH!"

Ignoring the drill, Sonar targeted the spherical chassis of the vehicle, slamming into it to knock the contraption off balance. With a whirl of gears, the wheels spiraled around the car to keep it from overturning.

Instantly, Sonar recognized the purpose of the gyroscopic design: the drill and wheels must have automatic controls.

Twice, Sonar had to duck back as the drill spiraled around the central sphere to face him. *"Clever little toy,"* Sonar had to admit, but already he was making dents in Walrusman's protective shell. Once he cracked it open...

Suddenly, a blurry orange ball flew at one of the wheels, only for them to automatically spiral out of the way, tearing a fresh path through the grassy knoll.

Sonar felt a clutch in his stomach as the orange ball shape unrolled, to reveal a young fox. *"Taylor!"*

Taylor spat out dirt as he tried to pick himself up. "Oof!"

With his attention focused on the hated Needle-mouse, Walrusman seemed confused by this new development, but the drill mechanism sprang to life on its own, whirring dangerously as it spun around to target the new foe.

Sonar didn't even have time to think, but that didn't stop him. Throwing himself at the drill, Sonar forced it off its course before it could pierce Taylor.

In slow motion, Sonar felt the sharp, spiraling metal ripping through his gloves, and leapt over it with a kick, traveling along with the drill's motion to stop it from ripping through *him*. Guiding it

with his hands, Sonar aimed the tip of the drill towards a hovering platform, and...

As it sunk into the hard stone, the drill bit caught, and the force of the drill traveled backwards into the vehicle.

For an instant, Dr. Walrusman tumbled like Humpty Dumpty, if Humpty Dumpty had chosen to sit inside a washing machine as opposed to sitting on a wall. “Woah! WOOAHAAAAGH!” he wailed.

With a metallic clink, a failsafe detached the central shell from the drill, and Walrusman floated into the air within his hovercraft, looking slightly green. “I’ll get you yet, Sonar! **Urp!** And your little fox boy too!”

With that, the bad doctor took to the skies, leaving a shaky trail of smoke behind him.

Taylor picked himself up from the dirt and struggled to find an appropriate curse. “Come back here you, you... you crumb-bum!”

Taylor felt something wrap tight around his chest, like a hug, and with a gust of wind, the entire world changed around him.

He was no longer standing in the middle of the valley? He was back in the Green Hill woods!

Taylor looked up to find Sonar holding him tight against his chest, and realized he'd been carried here in the blink of an eye.

Sonar rested Taylor's feet on the ground, but didn't release the young fox from his embrace as he gasped for air. "Taylor! What was that? I told you not to chase me out into the valley! We agreed you'd give the signal and retreat into the woods if you saw something!"

"Well, yeah, but I saw something coming out of the ground behind you! You said you can't hear things easily when you're running, so I came to warn–"

"'Well, yeah?' So you didn't forget what I told you?"

Taylor rolled his eyes. Did Sonar think he was stupid? "Duh, no! You were in trouble, so I had to help!"

Sonar pressed his fingers against his brow, fighting to keep his cool. "You didn't help by throwing yourself into danger! You could have been seriously hurt."

Taylor made a face and wagged his whiskers. Sonar sounded just like his mom, Roza Metre, fussing and fretting over Taylor playing in the street. "You threw yourself into danger! You could have been seriously hurt! What's the difference?"

Sonar's eyes snapped open, and when Taylor met his gaze, he suddenly had a very different impression...

The look Sonar was giving him was *exactly* the same look Mom and Dad had given Taylor when they caught him playing in the street years ago.

"Taylor, we will talk about this when we get home."

Sonar took Taylor's hand firmly in his, and started to walk at a brisk pace, Taylor trailing behind him.

Taylor loosened his grip slightly, expecting Sonar to release his hand and take off. "Um... Aren't you going to run? You hate walking!"

"I'm taking us the long way round the valley. It'll be slow going, but that way, I can keep an eye out for enemies without distractions... We'll be home in about two hours."

Taylor didn't dare argue.

With a pang of humiliation, Taylor realized he was being led home by the hand, like a spoiled brat who misbehaved in public. The young fox hung his head. He had plenty of time to wonder if he was in trouble, and what Sonar would say when they returned to their cozy little hideout.

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The walk home was agonizing.

After a solid two minutes of *not* running, Sonar found himself getting impatient.

Looking back at Taylor, Sonar suddenly felt a strange new respect for Uncle Chaz.

Taylor flinched at the glance, wondering if more lecturing was coming.

Noticing the gesture, Sonar looked forward. He didn't want to chew the kid out anymore. Sonar knew he was irritated, both at Taylor for what happened, and by the fact that he had to take it slow now.

But if Sonar had learned anything from Uncle Chaz, it was that he needed to keep cool. It wouldn't be fair to take his annoyance out on Taylor.

Twice, Sonar glanced up at patrolling robots in the distance, but at their slow pace, they easily evaded detection.

Sonar wondered how his parents or his Uncle would have handled this situation. He remembered once when his hyperactive antics had

gotten on his mom's nerves so much, she had blurted out, "I'm about to reconsider my opinion on spanking!"

Instead, Uncle Chaz had suggested she make Sonar run laps until he burned through his excess energy. As far as Sonar was concerned, if running laps was a punishment, it had to be the coolest punishment ever.

On the other hand, when eight-year-old Sonar had been caught toying with the workshop tools without permission, it had also been Uncle Chaz's idea to make Sonar eat his peas with a knife.

That stroke of genius, along with time out, had been more than enough to get Sonar to repent of any bad behavior. As soon as he learned about how other kids, like Princess Susie and Bonnie, tended to get punished, little Sonar had actually *begged* his parents to give him a spanking instead of grounding him.

In the end, his parents finally relented. Spanking was introduced into the household as a sort of "warning shot," while time-outs and grounding were reserved only for the most serious of offenses.

None of the other kids at the nursery could believe it when they heard Sonar triumphantly tell the story. Looking back on it as a teenager, Sonar was suddenly grateful to his parents for listening to his strange request. Exhaling sharply, Sonar found he was even

grateful to Chuck for making him eat every last pea on his plate with that stupid butter knife.

Finally, finally, *finally*, they arrived at Sonar's hideaway at the edge of Knothole.

As they stepped onto the porch, Taylor forced a smile. "Hey, we made it! Well, that took a little longer than expected, but... no harm done!"

Sonar released his hold on Taylor's hand. "Give me half a second, Taylor... and *wait* here."

Sonar stretched, cracked his fingers, and disappeared in a flurry of wind. He circled the house about a thousand times, nearly causing a twister. Then he screeched to a halt. Just as promised, he only took a half a second. "Ah, finally! All right, Taylor... *now*, let's talk about what happened."

Taylor gulped. In the time he'd had to think on their walk, he'd replayed in his mind everything over and over. If only he could have landed a hit on Dr. Walrusman, Taylor was sure he wouldn't be in trouble now. "Are you mad at me?"

Sonar shook his head, and tried to remember how these serious talks were supposed to go, now that he was in the opposite position. "I'm

not mad at you. I just had to... burn off some steam! Now, can you tell me what you did wrong?"

Downcast, Taylor shuffled his feet, and noticed Sonar tapping his own feet again. "I didn't get Dr. Mechanik! If I could just have been a bit faster, I could have helped!"

"No! You already *were* helping me by keeping a lookout. Your heads-up alerted me to danger. Then what happened?"

Taylor bit his lip, his pride stinging under the lecture. "I... I rushed in to help you, just like you'd do for me! But I screwed up!"

"*How* did you screw up?"

Taylor squinted, trying to find the right answer. "I landed flat on my face! But once I get some more practice, I'll be able to–"

Sonar sighed with exasperation. "Wrong answer. Let me help you out. You *agreed* to stay back. I told you to retreat into the woods if you saw anything, and *not* to follow me into the valley. That meant when you threw yourself into the fight, I was thrown completely for a loop!"

Suddenly feeling stupid, Taylor felt his tongue press awkwardly against the roof of his mouth. "I'm sorry, Sonar! I was just trying to be brave, like you! But I'll do better!"

Sonar shook his head. Usually, being called brave was all the reward he needed, but he remembered something Uncle Chaz had told him. “Bravery isn’t stupidity, and stupidity isn’t bravery... Look, I already know that you’re a brave kid, Taylor. But you can’t be a hero until you learn to think. If you can't follow my instructions and stay out of danger, then I can’t let you tag along with me on my adventures anymore.”

Taylor felt his throat catch, and as the meaning of the words dawned on him, tears sprang to his eyes. “But... but, I’m your back up!”

“You can’t back me up if you’re dead, Taylor.”

Sonar let the words hang in the air for a long moment. Taylor quailed under the weight of them, and to his eyes the whole world looked watery. "Please, Sonar, give me another chance! I promise I'll be more careful from now on. I’ve learned my lesson!"

At the sight of Taylor's tears, Sonar could have kicked himself, but he knew he had to stand his ground. “Have you? How do I know? What’s the lesson you learned?”

Taylor felt like Sonar had thrown him a life preserver as he was drowning. “I won’t disobey your instructions! I’ll listen to you! If I say I’ll do something, I’ll do it!”

Sonar nodded. “Bingo!”

“So… I can still go on adventures with you?”

Sonar stopped tapping his foot. This was unexpected. He knew Taylor seemed sorry, but what if he forgot his promises?

On the one hand, as long as Sonar was responsible for Taylor, some danger was always going to be baked into the cake. On the other hand, Taylor needed something to act as a reminder.

A mental image of a plate of peas and a butter knife appeared in Sonar’s mind. “That depends, Taylor. I like having adventures with you, but I like *you* even more. And that means keeping you alive. You’ll always be my little buddy Taylor…but if you want to be my *partner*, I need you to prove to me that you’re not just saying what you think I want to hear.”

Taylor nodded furiously. “Yes! I’ll do anything! Just name it!!”

Sonar nodded along with Taylor. “You’ll do anything? Well, in that case… I want you to do… nothing!”

“Huh?”

Sonar’s mind raced for an appropriate punishment. How did parents do this stuff? “You’re to wait here for… a month!”

“No adventures for a month? What am I supposed to do?”

“You will–uh–guard my digs! You will practice your flying and martial arts! You will keep an ear out for news of refugees from your home and word from your parents! But you will *not* be tagging-along with me on adventures. If you can do that for a month, I’ll know that you’re serious!”

“But I’ll die of boredom! Please! Can’t it be something else?”

“Well…” Suddenly, Sonar was second guessing himself. Knothole was well hidden from Walrusman’s sentries, but suppose its location was discovered?

“What… would your parents do in this situation?” Sonar had only meant the question as a way to buy him some time to think, but his curiosity peaked when he saw Taylor stiffen, like a soldier ordered to stand at attention.

Sonar raised an eyebrow. “Well, go on, Taylor. Help me out here!”

Taylor gulped, “Well, I once got grounded for an entire week!”

“What did you do?”

“When I was a pup, Mom caught me playing in the street… right after she’d told me not to!”

Sonar felt a wave of relief. If that’s what Mr. and Mrs. Metre did, he’d just take a leaf from their book! “I see. Well, if that’s what they did, then that’s the least that you deserve, right?”

Taylor nodded, but then his lip stiffened, and he shook his head. “No. That’s not what they did… Not all of it. Mom also… spanked me with a wooden hairbrush. And my dad too, once he got home, but he just used his hand.”

Sonar froze. He’d forgotten what a common punishment that was for other kids. Suddenly, he remembered how opposed his mom had always been to the idea. What was he supposed to do? How was fighting an army of robots built by a megalomaniac evil genius less stressful than parenting? “Okay! Well then… What will it be, Taylor? A month of being grounded or a spanking with a wooden hairbrush?"

“If I take the spanking, I get to go on adventures with you again?”

“You get to go on adventures with me again either way. The point is for you to show me you’re serious. Which do you think is more fair?”

Taylor seemed to think about it, then clenched his fists and puffed up his chest. “I'd rather have the spanking, please.”

Sonar nodded. It would easily have been the choice he’d have gone with in Taylor's situation. “Alright, Taylor, I think I’ve got an old wooden hairbrush somewhere? Yeah! My mom’s! In the dresser upstairs... Go and fetch it, then bring it to me.”

But as Taylor walked to Sonar's room, his heart was racing. Sonar might have thought of spanking as a minor annoyance, but to Taylor, the word “spanking” spelled doom.

As he fumbled with the drawers of the dresser, Taylor felt like he was watching from above as an outside force moved his body like a puppet on strings. Finally, he found the hairbrush. As he picked it up and examined it, he saw it was a lot like the one Roza Metre had used to discipline him.

The bristles were a bit different, as Needle-mouse bristles weren’t as thick as kitsune fur. But the sturdy wood on the back felt all too familiar, which was most relevant at the moment.

Taylor could just feel the sting it would leave on his bottom.

As Taylor thought back on what a brat he’d been that day, he knew a spanking was the least he deserved for letting down Sonar. Then and

there, he resolved to be brave, just like Sonar, and take what was coming to him.

But that didn't make the long, slow death march back downstairs any easier.

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Sonar kicked up his feet on the couch in a vain effort to keep his foot from tapping, impatiently.

He wondered if this is how his parents had felt whenever they'd had to spank him, not that it had happened that frequently. Despite having to raise the planet's single most wild rapscallion, Sonar's parents hadn't approved of spanking, instead preferring time out.

On one occasion when an argument between himself and little Princess Susie Apricorn had escalated into an all-out brawl, and knocked over an entire collection of antique armor like a string of dominos, Sonar's mom Bernadette had offered him the choice of getting grounded for a week, or getting spanked. It had been the easiest decision ever made in Sonar's early career as a trouble-maker.

Still, Sonar's mother was not a woman to be treated lightly. He still remembered the electric sensation of being referred to as "Sonar Maurice Needle-mouse" when he was in trouble. He'd never guessed

that giving a spanking might be as tense an experience as getting one. He'd have to write Mom a letter sometime.

Of course, Sonar wasn't Taylor's father, not even his older brother. But as long as he was responsible for this lost, frightened, brave, stupid, brilliant little fox, Sonar was determined to do whatever Taylor's parents would do for their own son.

Even though Taylor himself had suggested, and agreed to the punishment, would the kid resent him for this? With a pang of sadness, Sonar realized he might have to sacrifice being liked if that's what it took to get through to Taylor.

"Sonar? I found the hairbrush."

Sonar craned his neck to see Taylor's eye peeking out from behind the wall of the stairs leading to the second story bedroom.

The hairbrush poked out slowly from behind the wall. It was as though Taylor desperately wanted to obey the command to bring the hairbrush, but also desperately wanted to prevent his tails from entering the room for as long as possible.

Sonar removed his feet from the top of the couch and sat up. Then in a blur, he took the offered hairbrush in a flash and returned to his spot on the couch. Taylor only noticed the hairbrush had disappeared from his grip when he saw Sonar examining it. "All

right, Taylor. I don't know how your parents do this, so I'm counting on you to guide me. How does this go down?

"Well, Mom usually orders me to come to her and bend over her knee. Then I get spanked with a hairbrush, or wooden spoon, or something, until I cry. If I do something really naughty I get sent to my room for the rest of the day, and Mom and Dad both come to spank me again before bedtime."

Sonar gulped. That was a lot stricter than any spanking he'd ever had! The thought of being sent to his room for an entire day was nightmarish to Sonar.

"Well, you've never given me trouble before, so let's just get your spanking over with now. No getting locked in your room. No round two before bed."

Apparently encouraged by this news, Taylor poked his head farther out from behind the wall. "In that case, sometimes Mom and Dad each take a turn spanking me and that's that. I don't know how many whacks they gave me, I never counted. Sometimes it feels like it goes on and on forever, but they had a rule that the spanking ends once they know I've learned my lesson. I'm sorry, Sonar, I wish I could be more help!"

Sonar could see that there were no easy answers. He'd have to learn on the fly, just like when he was adventuring. He patted the couch cushion to his left. "That helps a lot, Taylor..."

With a flash of inspiration, Sonar recalled the dread of hearing his full name being spoken in a command. "Kyrie Taylor Metre, it's time for your spanking! Come here and get across my lap. I'll take it from there."

With a thrill, Taylor knew it was no use hiding behind a wall any longer. With a force of will, he entered into full view of the room and marched towards the couch. He didn't notice both his quivering tails drooping beneath his legs, instinctively covering his furry, yellow backside.

As Taylor lay across Sonar's lap, he felt Sonar tap the brush into the soft fur of the two tails still shielding his target. "Um, Taylor? You've gotta move your tails out of the way of... your tail."

Automatically, the two tails lifted and wrapped behind Sonar's back, as though clinging to him for support. "Sorry! Are they still in the way?"

Sonar settled back into position, finding the tails surprisingly comfortable to rest against. They were better than any pillow! "That's perfect!"

With his tail (his figurative tail, not his two literal tails) sticking up in the air, Taylor felt oddly comfortable on the couch, his whole weight supported by the cushions, his feet resting lightly on the armrest.

Unfortunately, having never given a spanking before in his life, Sonar didn't have much experience with concepts like "warming up." Without so much as a single word or love tap of warning, Sonar brought the hairbrush down on Taylor's furry little bottom with a loud "thwack," causing Taylor to yelp in surprise. The second spank landed so quickly after the first, even Taylor's quick brain hadn't had time to register that the spanking had begun.

What was worse, Sonar didn't even know which side of the brush to use, meaning Taylor only gradually felt a strange, prickling sensation from stiff bristles as they sank deep into his fur.

Sonar only knew how to operate at one speed: fast. The result was a furious series of spanks in quick succession, but with little force. Ironically, although the quick swats were doing very little lasting damage, Taylor was completely terrified by the furious pace of the smacking sounds, and confused by the sensation that he was being spanked by what felt like a remarkably soft cactus, but it didn't actually *hurt* that much. Not that poor Taylor was rationally aware of that yet.

"SONAR!" he wailed!

Instantly, Sonar stopped, hoping that they were finally done. “Oh? Have you learned your lesson? Is that about how long your parents spank you?”

Taylor was too dumbfounded to even notice the soft sting across his backside. “What was that?”

“... Your spanking?”

“That was a spanking? That was the craziest spanking I ever heard! I thought a bomb exploded and a swarm of hornets tried to sting me, only... Wait, it doesn’t even hurt that much? How did you even manage that? I thought you knew all about spanking and everything! Have you never done this before?”

Sonar grimaced. “Hey, I have done this before! Once, anyway!”

“When?”

“Just now.”

Taylor was so disappointed, he was furious. “No! That was not a spanking! I refuse to accept that as a spanking! If I allow that to be called a spanking, the definition of the word ‘spanking’ will forever be rendered meaningless!”

Sonar grinned sheepishly. “Oh... I’m sorry, little buddy!”

It was so sincere, Taylor suddenly felt sorry for Sonar. It was like he was seeing his hero for the first time. Sonar actually made mistakes? It was surreal. Taylor choked with shock. "I... I forgive you."

Satisfied, Sonar rested the hairbrush by his side and moved to stand up. "Really? Excellent! Well, I'm glad that's over!"

Feeling his temper rise, Taylor sprang up and pinned Sonar back in place, before snatching up the brush to examine it. "Oh no, it certainly is not! We agreed you were going to spank me just like my parents would! I have to prove to you I'm serious about being a good side-kick. I need *discipline!* Do you have any idea how nervous I was before this spanking started? Well, by golly, if I'm going to be spanked, I'm going to be spanked *properly!* Let me see that! ... Okay, I see what you did. You spanked me with the bristle-side of the brush? You want to use the *wooden* side. See how it looks like a paddle?"

Sonar slapped his forehead. "Oh, that makes so much more sense! Got it! Never use the bristle-side. Though, hypothetically speaking, why wouldn't I want to do that?"

Taylor felt his nerd rage rising again. "I didn't say *never* use the bristle-side. You should *primarily* use the wooden side. Look, it's simple physics. The wooden surface creates a solid impact. It *stings* and *scorches!* In contrast, the bristles create hundreds of impacts at

small points of contact, but the softness of the bristles cushions the kinetic force. It *prickles*, but has little impact. So use it to change the pace of the spanking and throw me a curveball *after* you've paddled me thoroughly with the wooden side!"

As Taylor thrust the brush back into his hand, Sonar realized he'd been rushing. *"Slow is fast, and fast is slow,"* as Uncle Chaz had once told him.

"Sorry again, Taylor. I guess I really don't know what I'm doing!"

Taylor sighed. "Well, I forgive you, again! So, why don't we try this... again! But this time, follow my lead."

Taylor flopped back into the spanking position, and gestured pointedly to his bottom. "You need to spank *slowly*, so that I have time to *feel* each one, and *think* about what I did and how much trouble I'm in. We're not trying to speedrun a video game or get a Guinness record for fastest spanking delivered in history. You can lecture me between each spank, or lecture while spanking me continuously, or take breaks to just lecture me for a while *and then* spank me for a while in silence. If I kick or struggle, you have to hold me in place and *keep* spanking me, and maybe give me extras for disobedience. Concentrate on *this* area..."

Taylor traced an oval shape with his fingers to indicate the lower part of his bottom. By this time, Sonar had snatched a notepad and

pencil from the nearby end table and was furiously taking notes as Taylor continued his lecture.

"Then, as needed, cover a wider area. You can even cover my thighs and the sides of my cheeks. Just be careful above *this* line, since that's my tailbone, but every square inch below *this* point is fair game. And if you think you need to get my attention again or emphasize a point, keep coming back *here*, to the sit spots, because that's what will be reminding me of this spanking for a week every time I sit down! Once you're satisfied that the spanking is almost over, probably when I'm at my limit and can barely keep from sobbing, *then* you can increase the speed and tempo and really wear me out! I've been a naughty little fox cub, and I deserve to be spanked long and hard, until I'm good and sorry, then put in time out with a bright, red tail that glows in the dark! ... Now, did you get all that?"

Sonar furiously examined his notes. "I think so! ... Thanks, Taylor! I had no idea this could be so complicated!"

Taylor felt his nerd rage fading, and without it, the fear of what he had just asked for came crashing back down. "You're welcome... Phew! Sorry for losing my temper. I'm sure you'll do great... Oh, and Sonar?"

Sonar paused as he raised the hairbrush, nervous another lecture was coming. "Yeah, little buddy?"

Taylor blushed and faced the pillows to brace for impact, not wanting to look at either Sonar or the brush at the moment. “I’m also sorry for what I did to earn this spanking! Now spank me!”

Sonar placed a reassuring hand on Taylor's waist, holding him in place. “I’m sorry too... partner!”

And with that, Taylor's first *proper* spanking from Sonar began.

With some slight additional coaching, Sonar’s performance improved remarkably. Taylor squirmed and kicked his legs, and his two-tails twitched madly, curling and uncurling reflexively. But Taylor didn't try to escape. He knew that he deserved this punishment, and he was determined to take it like a grown fox. But finally, his tears and grunts began to build, and Sonar remembered what to do.

Gradually building the rhythm of the spanking, Sonar didn’t relent until the repentant fox broke down, first wailing for mercy and finally bawling like a baby.

After a few more spanks to the all-important sit spots, Sonar set aside the brush and helped Taylor up off his lap.

Remembering what Taylor said about expecting to be put in time out, Sonar had a flash of inspiration. Just like Sonar’s mother used

to do back in the day, Sonar pinched Taylor by the ear to escort him to the corner for time out.

Taylor rubbed his sore bottom furiously, and looked up at Sonar with a mixture of relief and gratitude. “I'm sorry, Sonar. I promise I'll be more careful in the future. Thank you for spanking me.”

Now that it was over, Taylor seemed to have recovered his dignity. Sonar was as impressed by Taylor's resilience, as Taylor was surprised to discover it within himself.

Sonar smiled and patted Taylor on the head, guiding his nose into the corner. “I know you will, buddy. I forgive you. And you’re welcome.”

After thirty minutes, Sonar returned to release Taylor from time out.

Taylor looked up at him penitently. “Does my grounding start today?”

“Huh? What are you talking about?”

“Don’t you remember? When I disobeyed my parents and played in the street they didn’t just spank me. They also grounded me for a whole week. We agreed you were going to punish me the same way they would for the same offense.”

“Taylor! I thought we did all this because you didn’t want to get grounded!”

“Yeah, for a whole month, remember? My parents only ever grounded me for a week. Still a good deal in my book! Besides, it will be good for me to take some time to train... and think about everything.”

Sonar shrugged, and flashed a winning grin as he pulled Taylor out of timeout. “No one can say you aren’t tough as nails, Taylor. So be it. You are grounded!”

In response, Taylor surprised Sonar with a tight hug, grateful for his forgiveness and the lesson he had learned. Not used to being hugged, Sonar tensed in surprise, before returning the embrace.

From that day on, he was more careful to follow Sonar's instructions and stay out of danger, knowing that his friend only wanted the best for him. From that day on, Taylor wasn’t just Sonar’s side-kick. He was his partner.

The End

# *Sonar the Needle-mouse Gets Spanked:*

**Or:**

## *Royal Rumble: Smackdown*

"But what if I hurt him, Charles?"

"It's just a spanking, Bernie. You're not going to hurt him... Not permanently, anyway."

"Don't worry, Ma! I can take it!"

Bernadette the Needle-mouse covered her mouth nervously as her eight-year-old son Sonar lay draped across her lap. "I can't believe I agreed to this! I hate the whole idea of spanking! What if I emotionally scar him? What if he hates me? What if he develops a... complex?"

Sonar lifted himself up slightly off of Bernadette's lap to address his Uncle. "Uncle Chaz, what's a complex?"

Sir Charles Needle-mouse leaned back sagely. "It means she's afraid a spanking is going to scramble your brains, Sonny."

"That's baloney! She's not gonna' spank me on my head! Can't we get a move on, Mom? *I'm waiting!"*

"Precisely my point, Sonny! See, Bernie? This whole thing was his suggestion! You're not doing him any favors by dragging it out!"

As her son settled back in place over her lap, kicking his feet impatiently, Bernadette rested her left hand on his back, her right hand trembling. "But... how do I do this, Charles?"

"Well, why not start by reminding him why he's getting a spanking?"

Sonar shot Uncle Chaz a quizzical look. "But I already know why, Unc. I asked for one!"

"That's a different form of causation, Sonny. Go on, Bernie. Talk him through it."

Bernadette nodded shakily. "Honey, do you know what you did wrong?"

"Oh! That's easy. I tugged on Princess' Suz's braid too hard while we were wrestling. That's illegal, right Chaz?"

"Technically might be treason, but I'm sure King Apricorn will grant you clemency. He knows what a handful the Princess can be."

Sonar nodded furiously. “Yeah! And, anyway, she started it! I only tugged her braid to try and get her to tap out!”

Sir Charles’ ears perked up at this news. “Did she, now? Sounds like self-defense to me, Bernie. Maybe you shouldn’t spank him after all?”

Bernadette huffed and rolled her eyes. She’d long thought of Charles as an honorary older-brother, even before she’d married his younger brother Jules. But Charles’ way of helping usually involved ruffling her feathers. Too annoyed with Charles, she turned her attention to her prodigal son. “I don’t want you wrestling with girls in the first place, Sonar!”

“But, Mom! Princess Suz loves to play wrestling! We just… got a bit carried away this time.”

Sir Charles barely disguised a chortle as a sneeze, thankful his mustache concealed his smile. “To be fair to the kids, it really wasn’t their fault all those empty suits of armor were stacked like dominos around the palace.”

Bernadette rubbed her temples, suddenly rethinking her life-long opposition to spanking as she cross-examined the accused. “Hold on, that’s not how I heard it from Susie! She told me she tackled you *after* you tugged her braid!”

"Oh, yeah! First I tugged her braid, but not that hard. Then she tackled me, then we wrestled, then I tugged her braid again—you know—to get her to surrender, and then… we knocked everything over."

Sir Charles leaned back, wishing his brother Jules were here to enjoy the show. "Oh dear. Not a very good self-defense case. Sounds more like mutual combat. Maybe disorderly conduct?"

Bernadette snorted, then fixed Charles with a look of mock-fury to tell him to shut up. Bernadette knew full well that Uncle Chaz had successfully goaded her to take charge, and was secretly thankful for it. "What on earth possessed you to tug her braid?"

"Well… because usually when I tug one of her braids, Suz always looks at me with this cute, pretend-angry look, and says something funny like, 'I am *not* a doorbell, Mister Needle-mouse!' But this time she wasn't pretend-angry. I don't get it! She's so weird!"

Bernadette's cheeks flushed beet red. How long had this childhood soap-opera been going on unnoticed? "Sonar! I don't care how cute or 'pretend-angry' you think a girl is. Princess Susie's braids don't belong to you, so they aren't yours to yank! If you ever pull on her braids again, whether or not you're in a wrestling match, I will… spank you… *and* ground you!"

At long last, Sonar seemed genuinely intimidated. “Gounding? No! Anything but that! Please, Chuck! Tell her I’m sorry!”

Chuck hummed, resting his chin on his fist thoughtfully. “Sounds like genuine remorse to me, Bernie. Couldn’t you find it in your heart to let him off with just the spanking this time? Let mercy season justice!”

Bernadette knew she’d lost this fight. Her opposition to spanking as a method of child discipline had long been a point of personal pride. After all, timeouts were *insanely* effective for Sonar! (Perhaps *too* effective.)

For the past few years, she’d assumed her friendly debates with Sir Charles on the merits of corporal punishment had been purely abstract.

But gradually, she’d been forced to lengthen timeouts from a few minutes to a few hours to get results. She still felt guilty about the one time she’d grounded Sonar for an entire day.

Every time Bernadette found herself in the position of disciplinarian, Charles’ old argument would haunt her: for a boy with Sonar’s level of energy, how could hours, or days, of sheer boredom be *less* cruel than a minute or two of spanking?

Only half-convinced, Bernadette thought it would be clever to test Charles' theory by giving Sonar the choice: would he prefer to be grounded for a week as punishment, or... a spanking?

When she was a little girl, she'd have picked grounding every time, if given the choice. So, she had made the offer to Sonar. Bernadette had been looking forward to teasing Charles.

Only Sonar had immediately, and happily, requested a spanking. It was as though reality itself was conspiring to make fun of her preferred theories!

Holding Sonar in place across her lap with one hand, she patted his bottom experimentally, trying to remember how her mother had done it. "All right, Sonar. This time, I'm letting you off without grounding. But after your spanking, you're marching straight to Princess Susie to apologize. Are you ready?"

Sonar delivered a thumbs up. "Ready, able, and willing!"

With a sigh, Bernadette raised her right hand high as she fixed Uncle Chaz with a silent stare of fury, daring him to say, "I told you so!"

Uncle Chaz politely, and rather wisely, kept his silence.

Bernadette closed her eyes and delivered a half-hearted slap across Sonar's behind, producing a soft pat. She braced herself to hear her precious son wail in despair, but was met only by silence.

Sonar craned his neck to look over his shoulder. "Uh... Ma, that's not gonna' cut it! You don't want Suz to think we're wimps, do ya'?"

Bernadette felt her ears burning. Could she do nothing right? "Charles, how hard am I supposed to hit? I don't want to bruise him!"

Sonar shrugged. "How could you tell? My butt's already blue!"

Uncle Chaz raised a hand and pantomimed the correct motion. "Try thinking of it like you're swimming, Bernie. You're moving your arm through the water and... Stroke! Why do you think they call it 'paddling'?"

Bernadette had never been much of a swimmer, but too embarrassed to argue further, she was determined to try anyway.

As she raised her hand, thinking about olympic swimming pools, she felt even more annoyed at herself. She kept forgetting to arrange swimming lessons for Sonar. But there would be time for that another day...

With her second attempt at a spank, Bernadette concentrated on making a paddling motion. The impact rippled across Sonar's behind, just like waves through water. As she heard Sonar whoop, her maternal instincts to comfort her baby mixed with a sense of relief. At least she wasn't entirely incompetent!

Uncle Chaz nodded. "Good job, Bernie. Keep at it."

Bernadette nodded and slowly delivered Sonar's very first spanking. Every holler and yelp broke her heart a little, yet to her surprise, she found all her pent-up irritation vanishing as well. She knew she wasn't angry with Sonar. (That was the first thing Charles had warned her to be careful about when she called him, desperate to find out how—the *hell*—to spank a child).

But only as she let go of all her annoyance at Sonar, at Charles, and especially at herself, did she suddenly realize how *very* annoyed she had been.

After five smacks she paused the punishment, desperate to tell her son he was forgiven and have this over with. She looked to her old friend and brother-in-law for help in her hour of need. "Um, Charles? Do you think that's enough?"

"What do you have to say, Sonny? How are you holding up?"

Desperate to hang tough, Sonar rubbed his red shoes together. “It’s not… pleasant. But I think most the kids my age get at least ten swats!”

Seeing Charles give her an encouraging nod, Bernadette steeled herself. She knew this was her job. “In that case… Sonar Maurice Needle-mouse, I’m going to give you ten *more* swats. Fifteen total. And if Princess Susie calls you a wimp, I’ll give her just the same!”

Sonar smiled as he winced. “And then I’m forgiven?”

Bernadette’s heart swelled. Suddenly, she remembered the words: *“This hurts me more than it hurts you.”* She’d always thought the cliche absurd when she was on the receiving end. So she decided not to repeat it now, however true the feeling was. Instead, she took a deep breath, and adjusted her hold on Sonar’s waist. “I already have forgiven you, dear. This is just a reminder to keep you out of trouble! … I love you, Sonar!”

Sonar casually answered with a thumbs up. “I love you, Mom! … And I think it’s working! I feel sorry already!”

With fresh resolution, Bernadette delivered the final ten spanks. By the time it was over, Sonar was at the brink of tears, but remained resolute. He was too thrilled to be spared the torture of a week’s grounding to complain or fuss.

Satisfied, Bernadette and Sir Charles escorted him to the palace to meet King Apricorn and Princess Susie so the children could exchange apologies.

As they approached the royals, Bernadette caught a brief glimpse of Princess Susie lowering her hands from her bottom, after a gentle nudge from her father. It was so quick, the mother was sure Sonar didn't see it. So, she didn't pry when she noticed Susie vainly trying to hide her watery eyes and sniffling nose. Somehow, Bernadette felt vindicated in her decision to add spanking to her parental toolkit.

The Princess tried to maintain her prim composure as she apologized for tackling Sonar, but when she finally got to the fateful words, "Please forgive me!" her sobs finally overwhelmed her resolve, and she surprised Sonar with a hug.

Patting Susie on the back, Sonar looked up to address the adults. "Hey! Are we not allowed to wrestle anymore? Not even for fun?"

Bernadette stiffened. Did Sonar *really* have to ask this in the presence of the king? "No, Sonar! ... Though I suppose that's up to King Apricorn."

King Nigel of the House of Apricorn addressed the children with perfect, royal dignity. "Princess Susie? What have we to say to that suggestion?"

Susie wiped a stray tear, momentarily forgetting to use the royal "we." "Please father... I'll miss wrestling with Sonar. That's even worse than getting a spankin–" as the last word escaped her mouth, the Princess blushed furiously and looked to Sonar, wondering how bad he was going to tease her. To her relief, Sonar hadn't noticed... or was pretending he hadn't noticed.

King Apricorn shared a look with Uncle Chaz, disguising his amusement behind his official tone. "Sir Charles, we would hear your counsel on this grave matter."

Uncle Chaz bowed his head with token sobriety, secretly delighted to be sharing in a private joke with his oldest friend. "Well, your highness, it seems to me a good queen should be trained to defend herself as well as her people! Their wrestling isn't any less dignified, nor less important, than a friendly fencing match!"

King Apricorn nodded. "Well said! So long as it never happens inside the armory again, we have no objections. But Mrs. Needle-mouse, Sonar is your son. We cannot speak for you! What is your judgment?"

Realizing she was being included in the joke, by her King no less, Bernadette felt every shred of embarrassment about her situation vanish. She relished the expectant looks on Sonar and Princess Susie's faces, looking to her for the final judgment.

"Very well! Sonar, you may wrestle Princess Susie, if *she* says you can! But no hair pulling... and no full nelsons!"

As she listened to the two scamps' raucous cheers, Bernadette decided that, of all her accomplishments, nothing could quite compare to being a mother.

The End

# *Vanille the Hare Spanks Crème and Saucer:*

**Or:**

## *Strawberries and Whipped Crème*

Once upon a time in the cozy Floral Forest Village, there lived a delightful little girl named Crème the Hare. She had the most adorable floppy ears, which somehow granted her the power of flight. She had a fluffy white tail, a heart of gold, and wore an orange sundress. Crème lived in a cozy burrow with her mother Vanille, and her best friend, Saucer the Cosmo. Saucer was a small, sky-blue creature with a teardrop-shaped head and a tiny pair of wings, who was fond of wearing red bow ties. Like all Cosmos, he had a floating ball above his head, rather like a halo, that could form shapes and express his emotions.

They were inseparable friends, always playing and exploring the beautiful world around them.

One sunny afternoon, Crème and Saucer were frolicking in a meadow, chasing butterflies and picking flowers. As they played, they heard a loud commotion in the distance. Curious, they

approached the source of the noise and found two cloaked figures being attacked by one of Dr. Walrusman's robot minions.

"Oh, dear! This is not good," said Crème, with genuine concern.

"Chi!" Saucer exclaimed, as an exclamation mark appeared over his head.

Crème hesitated. "But mother always told me not to talk to strangers."

"Chi, Chi! Chi Chi Chi-Chi-Chi?" Saucer suggested, a question mark appearing over his head.

“You’re right, Saucer! We need to go home at once to tell an adult to phone 9-1-1! That’s what Mom would want me to do in an emergency!”

But just as Crème turned towards home, she heard the two strangers moaning piteously!

“Oh! Won’t someone come to rescue us from this vile robot created by Doctor Mechanik? Specifically someone like Sonar the Needle-mouse?” wailed a high-pitched voice, before squawking with fright like a chicken. “Buckaw!”

A dopey, lower-pitched voice chimed in, as though reading words from a script in a stiff monotone. “Yeah! We are innocent, unarmed civilians, in desperate need of help! If only... uh...”

“Sonar the Needle-mouse, you idiot!”

“Oh, yeah! If only Sonar the Needle-mouse would help us! ... Right now, please!”

Crème held her hands to her mouth and looked to Saucer. The poor strangers were so frightened, they could barely speak!

With a determined nod to one another, Crème and Saucer decided to disobey her mother's instructions and help the poor strangers. She flew towards the commotion, her ears flapping in the wind.

As she approached the scene, she could see the two cloaked figures cowering before a menacing robot composed of boxy shapes and holding what looked like a giant laser gun!

Diving between the robot and its two victims, Crème swung her powerful ears like a sling to knock the robot off balance.

To her surprise, the robot immediately crashed to the ground and fell apart like wet cardboard, revealing a skeleton of old mops and brooms held together by duct tape. Upon closer inspection, Crème recognized the head as an ancient boombox, probably from the

remote 1990s, with a crudely painted face, and the giant laser gun was a plastic toy loaded only with orange-tipped foam bullets.

“Huh? This isn’t a dangerous robot at all! But why were you two so afraid of–” Crème squeaked with surprise as she felt her arms grabbed from behind and twisted behind her back on each side.

“Chi! Chi!!!” [Translation: “Lookout, Crème!!!”] squealed Saucer in warning, but alas too late!

The two cloaked figures pulled back their hoods, revealing themselves to be none other than Scritch and Grunter, two of Dr. Walrusman’s most elite and dim-witted minions.

“Well, well, well,” said Scritch, snatching Saucer by the yellow ball that floated above his head. “Looks like we caught ourselves a little bunny and her pet.”

“Chi Chi!” [Translation: “You fiends!”] Saucer protested, but the two minions ignored him.

“Now, let's take them to the boss,” said Grunter, transforming his free robotic hand into a pair of shackles.

Crème’s ears stood on end as she saw Grunter prepare to handcuff her. “Wait! I can take you to Sonar if you let me go.”

Grunter beamed with delight, and immediately released his grip on Crème. “Really! You’d do that? Wow! You hear that, Scritch? She’s gonna’ take us to Sonar! The boss will be so proud of us!”

Crème immediately made a dash to the air.

Scritch wailed, scrambling over Grunter to snatch Crème by the ear. “No, you bucket head! We need her as a hostage to catch Sonar!!”

Crème screamed as she felt something grasp roughly at her ears, trying to pull her back down to earth.

Saucer cried, “Chi Chi!” [Translation: “Run, Crème!”] Unable to break free, Saucer bit Scritch’s hand with all his might, distracting the robotic chicken just enough to loosen his grip on Crème. Tears sprang to Crème’s eyes, and pulling with all her might, she broke free from Scritch’s grip and flew to the trees.

“No! Now look what you did, Grunter! You let her get away! I’m telling on you to Doctor Mechanik!”

“Nuh uh, you let her get away! I’m, uh, *double* telling on you to Doctor Mechanik!”

Now sobbing, Crème cried out from the safety of the trees. “Saucer!”

“Chi Chi!” answered Saucer urgently.

“What? Save myself and run to get help? But... I can’t leave you Saucer!”

Scritch smiled wickedly as he listened to this heartwarming display of self-sacrificial love. “Well, you'd better come back with us, or else we'll have to change your friend's name to Flying Saucer,” said Scritch, dangling Saucer before Crème like a toy.

“What's wrong with that?” Grunter asked, genuinely confused.

“I’m threatening to literally kill her pet, you dimwit!” said Scritch, rolling his eyes.

“That’s stupid! Changing his name won’t kill him! I don’t think you know what the word ‘literally’ means!”

“Do too!”

“Do not!”

Crème's heart sank as she realized the danger she and Saucer were in. She thought about how she should have listened to her mother and called 9-1-1 instead of talking to strangers.

“Please don't hurt Saucer,” she pleaded, tears streaming down her face.

“Chi chi Chi, chi chi-chi-shi!” [Translation: “Go find help, Crème! Everything will be okay!”] said Saucer.

Just as Crème turned to flee, she saw a blue streak racing towards them like a lightning bolt. It was none other than Sonar the Needle-mouse, coming to the rescue!

Seeing that they still had Saucer as a hostage, Sonar slammed on the breaks, and scowled at the Robo-Baddies. At the mere sight of the hero, the two bumbling robots stumbled over each other in fright, their circuits sparking with confusion.

Scritch barked at Grunter as he cowered behind him. “Do something! Sonar’s *literally* going to turn us inside out!”

“I'm trying, I'm trying!” Grunter retorted, his hands turning into a pair of oversized boxing gloves.

Sonar grinned, his eyes sparkling with mischief. “Oh, you want to box, eh? Hold on, Grunter! It’s not fair if I have to box you both at once! Let Scritch wait on the sidelines until I finish with you, then I’ll box him next. Fair and square! Whaddaya say?”

Grunter slammed his boxing gloves together. “Huh? Well, that’s mighty sporting of you, Sonar—Yeowch!”

Scritch seized Grunter by the antenna and whispered into his receiver. “That gives me an idea! You leave me a pair of boxing gloves, and when you fight Sonar, I’ll jump in and we’ll gang up on him!”

The two laughed maniacally at their evil plan, while Sonar stood tapping his foot, whistling, and pretending he couldn’t overhear their every word. “What’s the hold up, fellas? I’m waiting!”

“Oh! Coming Sonar! How about Queensbury rules?” Trying to be sneaky, Grunter opened a hatch on his caboose that revealed a hidden compartment. Scritch released his grip on Saucer and snatched at the boxing gloves in delight.

Taking the chance to escape, Saucer flew towards Crème.

“Huh? Why you little–” Scritch lunged forward to recapture the Chi, but Grunter's boxing glove-hands accidentally knocked him off balance. The two robots tumbled to the ground in a heap of metal.

“Stay back, Crème!” Sonar called out. “I've got this under control!”

Crème nodded, her eyes wide with awe as she clutched Saucer tightly.

Sonar zipped between Scritch and Grunter, and pretended to notice the second pair of boxing gloves for the first time. “Oh! Are these mine? How thoughtful of you! Okay, Queensbury rules it is!”

Grunter stiffened in shock, and swung behind him, trying to land a cheap shot on Sonar. Instead, Sonar ducked to pick up the boxing gloves, and Grunter’s fist flew over him and into Scritch’s leg.

The chicken wailed and hopped on one foot. “Buckaaauw! Grunter, that was my drumstick!”

Sonar pointed at Grunter accusingly. “Hey! That was a cheap shot! Are you gonna’ stand for that, Scritch?”

“I most certainly am not! Grunter, I am literally gonna’ mop the floor with you! Gimme those!” Scritch snatched the boxing gloves and put them on.

Sonar stroked his chin. “Hmm? Grunter, do you think Scritch can *literally* mop the floor with you?”

Grunter ignored Sonar and fixed Scritch with a menacing glare. “No he can’t! He can only *figuratively* mop the floor with me!”

As the argument escalated, neither of the robots noticed Sonar had quickly donned a boxing referee costume. As the boxing match

between Scritch and Grunter began, Sonar fixed Crème with a stern look over his shoulder, silently craning his neck to order her to head home. Crème obeyed, carrying Saucer, who covered his ears to drown out the sounds of the robots pummeling each other, before returning to their respective corners where Sonar zipped back and forth acting as each combatants coach.

After three splendid rounds of ferocious boxing, both robots were reduced to pieces.

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Crème flew home alone for a few minutes, sadly wondering if Mr. Sonar was okay, only for him to catch up with her, grinning. “Well, that was fun!”

Crème giggled, her cheeks flushed with excitement. “That was amazing, Mr. Sonar!”

Sonar winked. “Don't mention it, keed.”

But then his expression grew serious. “Now, we should probably get you home before your mom starts to worry.”

Crème's smile faltered, and she looked down at her feet. “Do you think she'll be mad at me for disobeying her and talking to strangers? What if she gives me a spanking?”

Sonar placed a gentle hand on her shoulder. “I'm sure Mrs. Vanille will be a little upset, but she'll be so happy to see you safe and sound. And you know what? Even if you do get in trouble, your mom still loves you more than anything in the world.”

“Really?”

“Absolutely.”

With that, Sonar took Crème's hand and led her and Saucer back to Floral Forest Village. The noon sun peeked out from behind the clouds, casting a warm glow over the cottages.

Crème noticed several flying police cars and fire trucks patrolling the streets. Her ears perked up as she overheard adults discussing the sightings of Walrusman’s robots near town. At the sight of her and Sonar, a female police officer approached and Sonar recounted the whole story.

Crème stiffened as the officer directed her attention to her and Saucer. “Your mother’s been missing you both, young lady! Fortunately, after Sonar warned us about Dr. Walrusman’s robots prowling nearby, he volunteered to help us scour the woods... Are you hurt?”

Crème shuffled her feet. “No ma’am.”

Of course, in a sleepy villa like Floral Forest Village, the news of dangerous robots nearby, not to mention the news of a missing girl, would travel like wildfire.

As they approached Vanille's cottage, they could see Vanille the Hare standing at the entrance holding a phone, her Chi companion Choco sitting on her shoulder. At the sight of Crème, Vanille hopped into the air waving, and spoke into the receiver. "Yes, officer! Sonar is bringing her home now. I'm going to check on her... Of course, thank you for all your help!"

Crème gulped. Mom already knew?

Vanille cried as she rushed to hug her daughter tight. "Oh, Crème! I was so worried!"

"I'm sorry, Mom," said Crème, her voice muffled against her mother's fur. "I just wanted to help those two strangers, and then I got into trouble."

Vanille smiled, her eyes filled with love and relief, as she embraced them both. "Well, I'm just glad you're safe."

Then Vanille pulled back from the hug, placing a hand on either of Crème's shoulders. "But we need to have a serious talk about what happened today."

Crème and Saucer glanced at each other, wondering just what “a serious talk” could mean.

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Crème and Saucer sipped nervously at their chamomile tea, wondering if Vanille was angry with them as she took their dishes to the sink.

Vanille washed the dishes to try and calm her nerves. Finally she wiped away a tear and took a deep breath, before putting on a calm face. As she turned to face Crème and Saucer, she saw they were guilty-faced. Vanille knew it was important to remain in control for both their sakes.

Patting them both on the head, Vanille sat down with them and began. “Crème, I know you thought you were doing the right thing by helping those strangers, but why did you disobey me and talk to them in the first place?”

“Mom, I'm sorry,” Crème replied, her voice soft. “I just wanted to help them, and I thought it would be okay. I didn't mean to make you worry.”

“I know, dear,” Vanille said, her voice full of understanding. “But you must understand that it's not safe for you and Saucer to talk to

strangers without an adult present. You could have been in real danger."

"I understand now, Mom," Crème said, her ears drooping.

"Chi chi, chi? .... Chi-chi?" inquired Saucer, his ball transforming to a question mark.

Crème's eyes widened at Saucer's words, then she nodded. "You're right, Saucer. We both should have known better. Mom? Do you think I deserve a spanking for what I did?"

Vanille looked at her daughter, a mixture of love and concern in her eyes. "Do you think you need a spanking to remind you to never talk to strangers again?"

Crème gripped the sides of her chair, hanging her head. Finally, she whispered, "Yes, I do."

"And what about you, Saucer?" Vanille asked, turning to the little Chi. "Do you think you deserve a spanking too?"

"Chi!" Saucer nodded, his little ball bobbing up and down.

Vanille stood up from the table. "Alright then... Come with me!"

Vanille took a wooden spoon from the kitchen counter and led Crème and Saucer to the living room, where she sat down on a wooden chair. “Come here, both of you,” she said, patting her lap.

With heavy hearts, Crème and Saucer climbed onto Vanille’s lap, and she gently positioned them so that their quivering bottoms were facing upwards. Then, Vanille turned her attention to Crème, flipping her orange skirt up and over her back to reveal white cotton panties below her trembling, white cotton tail. Taking a deep breath, Vanille began to spank them with her open hand, her glove coming down firmly first across Crème’s right cheek, then across Saucer’s round, blue behind.

Crème winced at the sting. Tears welled up in her eyes as she thought about what she had done, and how she had put not only herself but also Saucer in danger. She could hear Saucer’s little squeaks of discomfort each time Vanille’s palm impacted with a sharp pop.

Both Crème and Saucer trembled a bit when Vanille paused the spanking. She retrieved the wooden spoon from her apron pocket and began the spanking all over again.

The two friends flinched as they felt the first stinging slap from the sinister spoon.

The spanking was not overly harsh, but Vanille was determined to be firm enough to make an impression, and they, in turn, were determined to lay obediently and accept their spankings.

Finally, Vanille paused the spanking, listening to both sniffle slightly. "Crème, I want you to think about something. Do you know how I asked you to take care of Saucer?"

Crème nodded, tears welling up in her eyes, not from the spanking, but at the sight of Saucer quivering next to her. "Yes, ma'am. I remember."

"Do you see how by disobeying, you not only put yourself in danger, but also Saucer?"

Crème buried her face in Vanille's lap, remembering how Saucer had urged her to go and leave him behind. Crème's tears became racking sobs. "I... I'm sorry! I was a bad friend!"

She flinched as she felt a soft pat on her back, her body reacting as if it were another spank. Instead, she looked up to see Saucer smiling at her and felt Vanille stroking her back.

"Now, now, Crème, you're not a bad friend. But you were irresponsible. Because you're older than Saucer, I think you deserve a second spanking. You may get off my lap, Saucer. You can wait for Crème to join you in timeout."

Saucer turned his head to glare at Vanille defiantly. “Chi, Chi!”

Sniffling, Crème held Saucer’s hand in her own. “No, Saucer. Mom’s right. You don’t need another spanking… But I do! Now, go to timeout, mister!”

Saucer hesitated, then obeyed, fluttering his wings to lift himself off Vanille’s lap. As Saucer settled onto the wooden stool in the corner, his brother Choco the Chi gave him a pat on the back with an encouraging, “Chi chee!” [Translation: “Good job!”]

Vanille sighed with relief, happy that Saucer had obeyed rather than insist on a second spanking. She hated spanking Crème and Saucer, and knew that seeing her friend suffer would only break Crème’s heart. “Crème, are you ready?”

Crème shook her head, trembling. “Not yet, Mommy. I think… I deserve a sp-spanking on my… b-bare b-b-bottom!”

“Oh, do you, now?” Vanille patted Crème’s panty-clad behind, firmly enough to ruffle the fabric.

In the past, she had told Crème that a bare-bottom spanking was reserved only for very bad behavior. Considering how compliant Crème had been, Vanille had not originally planned to bare Crème’s

bottom, though disobeying the rule to talk to strangers would certainly merit it.

Vanille had already forgiven Crème, but if Crème was asking for this of her own free will, Vanille knew that Crème must still be feeling terribly guilty.

So, Vanille decided, then and there, to make this spanking a memorable one indeed.

"That's very brave, Crème. In that case, stand up and drop your britches. Then climb back across my lap!"

"Yes, ma'am!" Hopping lightly up and off Vanille's lap, Crème dropped her panties just below her bottom, which was only slightly pink from her first spanking, then skipped back up into position, lifting her own skirt up over her back as she lay down. Crème could see a few tear stains on the carpet below her, and could see her own dangling feet through the legs of the chair.

Vanille retrieved the trusty wooden spoon from her apron pocket, and tapped the rounded end of the spoon against Crème's bare behind. Crème's eyes went wide, recognizing the texture of the wooden surface against her furry fanny from previous experience. She looked back at her mother, trembling.

"Crème, I'm going to give you twenty spanks with the spoon. Then, your spanking will be over. Do you think that is a fair punishment?"

Crème answered in her habitually polite manner. "Yes, ma'am!"

"Do you think twenty whacks is enough? I don't want you to go on feeling guilty forever. Once your spanking is over, you are forgiven. Do you think you'll be able to forgive yourself, too?"

As she considered the question, Crème suddenly felt her tension melt. Right now, it really *did* sound like a fair punishment! And once it was over, she knew she would be very sorry indeed. But anything would be better than the terrible burden of guilt she felt. "Yes, ma'am!"

"Very good, dear. Take a moment to compose yourself."

Crème blew her nose delicately on a hanky, tucked it back into her front pocket, and settled back onto Mom's lap, gripping the legs of the chair to steady herself as she felt the warning *"Tap, tap, tap"* of the spoon.

Vanille raised the spoon high. "Now, let's begin."

Knowing that the time for lecturing had passed, Vanille slowly delivered the first ten swats with the back of the wooden spoon, giving Crème time to feel each one leave a red oval mark across her

lower cheeks. Crème yelped and howled at the sound of each smack. She held her hands and legs in place as resolutely as she could, but she could see her own feet kicking up behind her, reflexively.

Crème willed her feet to keep still. But as she saw her panties slowly succumb to gravity and catch around her knees, Crème's eyes grew watery and she shut her eyes tight.

Impressed by Crème's resolve, Vanille lightly twirled the wooden spoon in her hand, then tapped Crème's bottom lightly three times with the concave surface. In order for the lesson to be most effective, Vanille knew it was important to give Crème time to reflect on what was coming to her.

Crème's eyes fluttered open as she felt the hollow side of the spoon. A tiny voice at the back of her mind said, *"Uh oh!"* before the spoon landed, and her world turned black yet again.

The inner side of the spoon hurt just as much as the outer side, but it left red marks like rings and produced a sharper popping sound with each impact. It had just the effect Vanille hoped for.
Thrown for a loop by the change of events, Crème's resolve crumbled and she stopped trying to hold back her tears. After the second smack, Crème let out a high-pitched yelp, and at the third, her cry became a long, shuddering wail of despair.

Vanille landed the next three smacks in quick succession, and Crème arched her back and kicked her legs, now crying freely. As Crème's head drooped back down, her panties also dropped weakly down to her ankles. Gravity had won against her resolve.

As the last four spanks landed slowly, Crème's feet squirmed uselessly one final time, stretching the elastic band of the undergarments, before Crème lay exhausted across her mother's knee, every muscle in her body weary. Crème felt her tears damping her cheeks and her ears flopping to the carpeted floor.

She had lost count long ago and lay waiting for the next spank, her only remaining thought one of acceptance.

Instead, Vanille set aside the spoon and patted Crème's red bottom reassuringly with her hand. "That's twenty. Good job, Crème. I'm so proud of you! Saucer? Come out of timeout. I want to give you both a hug!"

Finally, the spanking was over, and Vanille pulled them both into her arms, hugging them tenderly. "I forgive you both," she said, her voice full of love. "But let that be a reminder to you! Never to talk to strangers without an adult present. It's for your own safety."

"We understand, Mom," Crème said, sniffling as she wiped away her tears. To her embarrassment, she realized that her nose had been running.

Vanille then led Crème and Saucer to timeout, setting Saucer back on his little stool as Crème stood. “Now, think about what you did wrong and how you can avoid making the same mistake in the future,” said Vanille, her voice stern again.

Feeling her panties tug at her feet, Crème bent down to retrieve them. As Vanille planted a light love-tap of warning across the still-bare-butted bunny’s buns, Crème’s tail stood on end. Vanilla wagged a finger. “No, Crème. You know the rule. Keep those right where I left them!”

Crème’s hands flew into position behind her head, her fingers interlaced, and her nose pressed lightly against the wall. “I’m sorry, Mom! I forgot!”

Vanille smiled as she removed a hairpin from behind her ear and neatly pinned Crème’s skirt up above her tail. In the past, she had needed to give Crème additional spankings for disobeying and leaving timeout, but Vanille knew to be patient with Crème’s innocent mistakes. “That’s okay, dear. Now stand in the corner until I come and release you. And no rubbing!”

“Yes, ma’am!”

As Crème and Saucer stood in the corner, they could feel the warmth of the sun on their already warm backsides and the gentle breeze from the open window.

“Chi Chi,” Saucer said softly, his eyes watery.

“I know, Saucer,” Crème replied, her voice trembling, but this time with relief. “It really hurt, but I'm glad Mom spanked us. It's important to learn our lesson, right?”

“Chi. Chi chi chi!” Saucer agreed, bobbing his little head.

“And I'm so grateful for you, Saucer,” Crème answered, her eyes shining. “You're always there for me, even when we get into trouble. We have to be more careful in the future, okay?”

“Chi chi-chi?” Saucer said sympathetically, glancing at Crème’s bottom.

Crème twisted her head ever-so-slightly out of position to peek at the damage to her backside. Sure enough, she could make out the bright red marks left by the spoon, a neat collection of ten little polka-dots and ten large rings.

“Yes, Saucer, I’m glad it’s over, but I sure deserved it. Whew!”

“Chi chi chi, Chi-Chi!”

“You’re right, Saucer! I do feel much better now. You’ve forgiven me. Mom’s forgiven me. I think I’m ready to forgive myself!”

Unbeknownst to them, Vanille listened in on their conversation as she prepared a tray of milk and cookies, her heart swelling with pride, and relieved to hear that Crème wasn’t being too hard on herself. “Crème, Saucer! You may come out of timeout now.”

The duo turned around, their faces lighting up with relief and gratitude. They rushed into Vanille's arms, hugging her tightly. Crème was so excited, she actually forgot to pull up her panties and fix her dress.

Crème cheered. “Thank you, Mom.” Then Crème paused, and added composed herself. “We've learned our lesson, and we promise to be more careful in the future.”

“Chi Chi!” Saucer agreed.

“That's all I can ask for, my sweet Crème,” Vanille replied, her voice filled with love. “Now, let's all have some cookies and milk to cheer ourselves up, shall we?”

Vanille’s chocolate chip cookies were legendary. Forgetting everything else, Crème spun a pirouette as the warm aroma of the cookies called her name. But then, something almost tripped her!

Vanille snickered as she caught her daughter, and removed the hairpin holding her skirt up at the back. “Crème, dear? You forgot to cover your tail, silly!”

Blushing madly, Crème covered her bottom with one hand as she retrieved her panties with the other.

The cookies were so warm and wonderful, Crème thought that even the warmth of her bottom seemed to lose its sting.

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That night, Crème kicked her feet playfully behind her as she lay on her tummy in her pajamas, writing in her diary before bed. Still a little sore and smarting, she had unbuttoned the drop seat of her jammies to let the cool air soothe her well-spanked tail.

“Dear Diary,

Today was quite an adventure! I woke up early and had breakfast with my mom, Vanille, and my best friend, Saucer. After breakfast, I wanted to help some strangers who seemed to be in trouble, but it turned out to be a trap set by Scritch and Grunter. I was so scared, but then my hero, Mr. Sonar, came to the rescue! He saved me and Saucer and brought us back home to my mom.

When we got back, I knew I was in trouble. I had to tell mom I disobeyed her rule to never talk to strangers. I felt so guilty. My mom was disappointed, but she was also relieved that we were safe. She decided that Saucer and I needed a spanking to teach us a lesson, and she was right!

I only cried a little during the first spanking. Saucer was crying too, and I felt so bad for getting us both into trouble. But we both knew that we deserved it for disobeying and putting ourselves in danger.

I'm glad that Mom gave me a second spanking and not Saucer. It was bad enough I got him into trouble in the first place!

The wooden spoon was really painful, and I cried a lot. My bottom felt like it was on fire. It was hard not to squirm and try to avoid the spanks.

After the spanking, my mom hugged me and told me that she loved me and that she wants me to be safe. I promised her that I would never disobey her again and that I would always be more careful in the future.

My bottom is still a little sore, but I know that it's a reminder of the lesson I learned today. I'm so thankful to my mom for loving me enough to discipline me, and to Mr. Sonar for always being there to save the day.

I'm going to do better, and I'll never forget the importance of listening to my mom.

Goodnight, Diary.

Love,
Crème”

Putting away her diary and clicking off the light, Crème blew a kiss to Saucer in the crib next to her bed, and tucked herself under her blankets, laying on her side as she drifted off to sleep.

The End

# *Sonar the Needle-mouse Spanks Princess Susie Apricorn:*

**Or:**

## *A Hot Bottom for a Hot-Dog Heroine*

### Chapter I: Susie's Crazy Idea

Princess Susie Apricorn peered out from the piles of trash and rubber tires behind Mechanik's garbage facility, her heart pounding as she watched SWAT-bots coming to and fro, hauling piles of smashed robotic refuse. The screen of her communicator flickered, and the robotic voice of her A.I. assistant, Nicole, broke the silence. "Incoming communication from Sonar the Needle-mouse. Do you want to listen?"

Susie tensed and quickly muted Nicole. Two SWAT-bots froze, dropped their burden, and marched toward the mountain of tires that concealed Susie. Susie held her breath and crouched low, trying to make herself small. Then a blaring spotlight appeared from the sky, illuminating the two confused SWAT-bots. Above them, a flying hover unit blared in a robotic voice eerily similar to Dr. Mechanik's. "SWAT BOTS! BACK IN FORMATION IMMEDIATELY."

One of the SWAT-bots pointed stiffly at the pile of trash, before a laser bolt ripped through its chest, and it collapsed into pieces. The hover unit aimed its laser turret at the second SWAT-bot. "OPERATION: 'TECHNOLOGICAL TERROR' MUST BE COMPLETED ON SCHEDULE. STANDARD PATROL PROTOCOLS ARE NO LONGER IN EFFECT. DELETE UNNECESSARY SUB-ROUTINES... OR YOU WILL BE DELETED!"

The second SWAT-bot saluted, and stepped on the smoldering remains of its companion, before returning to its work hauling debris. Susie trembled with relief. Once the hover unit had flown away, she pulled out Nicole and typed: "Silence all communications. Relay messages in text only."

Nicole blinked, and displayed Sonar's message: "Suz, we got the prisoners out. On the home stretch. Ready to rendezvous?"

Susie groaned. How did Sonar *always* manage to break his record for completion time every mission? Susie typed. "No. I'm fine. Just create a distraction to cover the Rescue Team's retreat. Go wild."

"We're clear. Lard-butt is max distracted. Bonnie is covering the Rescue Team. Coming to pick you up now."

"No! Keep Mechanik distracted. That is an order." Susie tensed as she heard an engine revving up. The last of the SWAT-bots had left,

boarding the flying garbage-disposal unit, and the garage door began to shut, clanking and stuttering.

Nicole's light blipped to indicate a new response, but Susie pocketed the communicator without looking at Sonar's reply. Then she made a bee-line for the door, trying to keep to the shadows along the wall.

With no time to properly clear the room, Susie rolled under the garage door just before it slammed shut, and scanned the inside of the waste disposal facility. To her relief, there were no remaining SWAT-bots. Whatever Mechanik was scheming, he clearly needed all hands on deck.

Susie trembled as she pulled out Nicole, and brought up the blueprints for the building. "... I can do this!"

A few months ago, Susie had made a discovery. Sonar's Uncle Chaz had been the software engineer for Mobotropolis' water treatment facility... before Dr. Mechanik's coup-d'etat, after which it had been converted into yet another storage facility for scrap metal.

But after carefully reading through Uncle Chaz's old code, Susie found a vulnerability. There were even notes by Uncle Chaz on how to patch it in a future update. But if that vulnerability had never been patched, and if Susie could reach the central computer terminal, there was a chance she could shut down the entire

facility... or even better, find an exploit to remotely access Mechanik's main computer terminal.

She'd tried to explain this idea to the others, but frankly, Susie was the only person left in the Freedom Fighters who had a solid grasp of computer programming. Rotor had a basic understanding of computer hardware, but only what he needed for his specialty work as a mechanic. Little Taylor the Kitsune had been pestering Susie with questions about her "computer work," and his questions had been surprisingly insightful. But no matter how precocious he was, Taylor was still only eight-years-old.

The past few weeks had been agony for Princess Susie: she was sitting on a potential strategy that could take out Mechanik with one, decisive blow, to have her revenge on the man who had taken her father away from her, and only she was able to understand even the basics of the plan.

And so, when their mission to rescue a group of their fellow woodlanders from Mechanik's prisons had led them near the old water treatment facility, Susie had made up her mind. A quick reconnaissance mission, while Sonar and Bonnie did the heavy lifting. Distracting Mechanik had already been part of the plan. Why not use the same distraction to kill two bots with one stone?

Susie took a shaky breath as she navigated through the dim, musty halls and up a flight of metallic stairs. The stairway at the top

surrounded a massive corridor that had once been the main waste water treatment area, though the giant basins now held glowing, green acid. Above the basins, words had once been carved in marble: "The End of Science is to Serve the Flourishing of All Life." The last few words had been smashed off, so that it now read, "The End of Science is to Serve..."

At the top of the stairs, Susie found the central control room, and used a plastic Mechanik-Bucks card to pick the lock. The computer terminals were a bit dusty, but undamaged. Apparently, Mechanik had been too lazy to update Uncle Chaz's computer set up.

Her fingers trembling, Susie quickly brought up the command-line interface, checking Nicole for the keywords she needed to find the exploit. There on the screen, she saw Sonar's last message: "Suz what's going on?"

Susie ignored it. Get in. Get out. They had pulled missions like this all the time, in facilities with far tighter security.

Here's the thing about hacking computers: it never looks as cool or exciting as it does in the cartoons. Susie had read a few of Sonar's favorite superhero comics over the years, and laughed at the absurd "elite hacker" scenes. The cartoons always make hacking look like playing a high-stakes point and click game, with nonsense typing for dramatic effect.

But really, Susie had done most of the work already, spending weeks carefully reading Chuck's code in her bedroom, alone. Once she understood the exploit, Susie knew she could find it easily. The hard part was going to be deciding what to do with it, if it worked. If Mechanik had been foolish enough to connect his computer systems with Uncle Chaz's, she could download everything she needed to Nicole for study, or even attempt a manual shutdown of Mechatropolis from here.

As Susie hit enter, the screen displayed the symbol of the Walrusman Empire... and gave her a command line. Her palms sweating, Susie attached Nicole to the terminal, before the screen blinked.

Dr. Mechanik appeared on the screen. "Well, hello there, whoever you are. I see you too are a fan of old programming work. You know, Sir Charles, one of the few things I admire about you... you always took *excellent* notes on potential vulnerabilities."

A robotic figure appeared on screen next to Mechanik, and Susie instantly recognized Uncle Chaz... or what was left of him. Uncle Chaz's eyes, once sparkling blue, now glowed with artificial red light. "YES... MASTER MECHANIK..."

Susie flinched as she heard a siren wail, and the entire room was bathed in pulsing red light. "ALERT! SECURITY BREACH DETECTED! ALL AVAILABLE UNITS, CONVERGE ON WASTE DISPOSAL FACILITY 1-9-8-4!"

Susie dove for the door, and as she burst out, she heard Mechanik's laughter, and felt as if his eyes were watching her from the screen. "I look forward to meeting you, little hacker."

Susie saw metal shutters dropping along the windows that surrounded the water treatment facility, and made a dash to the stairs, sliding down the railing to gain speed. Susie stuck the landing, but stumbled as she tried to sprint to the garage door.

But, of course, it was slammed shut. Just as she had left it earlier. Susie slammed her fist against the door. "Stupid, stupid, greenhorn mistake!"

Then she spotted a long strip of scrap metal and snatched it up, hoping to use it as a makeshift crowbar.

With a wrench, Susie lifted the garage door by a fraction of an inch, before a laser bolt ripped through the door from the opposite size, grazing Susie's shoulder. She screamed and fell back, landing right on her tail.

A Hover-bot's electronic voice boomed from behind the door. "SURRENDER IMMEDIATELY,
ANTHROPOMORPHIC-ANIMALIAN SCUM!"

With tears in her eyes, Susie knew this was it. She didn't have Sonar's speed, nor Bonnie's mechanically-enhanced strength. She was just a stupid girl, an ex-princess, trying to lead a rebellion with a handful of other children. And she had failed.

Then Susie heard a window shattering, and turned to see a blue blur flying in the air above the water-treatment bins. Sonar the Needle-mouse had burst through a window at Mach 1 speed, with a flying killer drone hot on his tail, an instant before the metal shutters slammed down, trapping him within. Susie recognized the design as a miniature version of one of Mechanik's deadly Stealth-bots.

Sonar landed on the rim of one of the bins, his face illuminated by the eerie green glow of the acid within, before he leapt to dodge a blast of laser fire from the drone. "Suz! I'm getting you outta here!"

Susie ducked as the heavy hover bot crashed into the garage door behind her. "We're cut off! No way out!"

Sonar hopped to the metal walkway, scrambling to climb up before the drone blasted a molten metal hole where his head had been a second before. "Then just let the bad guys in!"

Susie felt the reverberation as the hover bot smashed into the garage door with such force, it dented it in slightly. "Are you crazy? We need a plan!"

Sonar grinned as he hopped off the wall to evade another deadly blast. “That’s an order, Princess!”

Wanting to tell Sonar that the Crown Princess of House Apricorn was not to be ordered around, and also wanting to obey him, Susie spotted the massive hover bot pulling back, readying for another charge. “RAMMING SPEED!”

Susie jammed the metal strip into the crack between the door and the wall, just below a hinge that had nearly been knocked loose, and with a sharp twist, the hinge snapped free.

Susie turned to find Sonar grinding down the handrail on a direct collision course toward her. “Think fast, Suz!”

There was no time to think. Susie dove to the side, just as the hover unit burst through the door, but thanks to the broken hinge, it miscalculated the force of its charge.

Sonar hopped off the rails and landed on the front screen of the hover unit, slapping his rear end to taunt the flying Stealthbot. As the drone fired a laser bolt like a sniper, Sonar rolled to evade, and the beam ripped through the big hover unit. The massive hover unit flew straight into the smaller killer drone, crushing it flat as it smashed through the metal stairs.

The lights on the hover unit flickered. “ERROR! RECALCULATING-TING-TING...” There was a sharp bang, like a car engine backfiring, and the front panel of the hover unit shot off, exposing the smoking, oil-drenched inner workings of the machine.

Just as Susie stood shakily, she felt herself being swept off her feet, and carried away by Sonar. Instinctively, she clung tight to him as he carried her away from the cold, metallic streets of Mechatropolis in a blur, before she found herself at the edge of the Great Forest, the safe zone.

Susie looked up at Sonar with loving eyes, before remembering she didn’t like being carried. “Sonar! Put me down! You were supposed to be providing a distraction.”

After setting Susie down, Sonar tapped his foot, looking immensely pleased with himself. “I *did* provide a distraction. I led that new bite-sized Stealth-bot far away from the Rescue Team, *while* I made it back to our rendezvous point to pick you up, exactly like we planned. Then I found you missing, heard the sirens, and did what I do best: I kept moving...”

Suddenly, Sonar stopped tapping his foot, and looked at Susie with a frown. “Say... What were you doing in the water treatment facility? That wasn’t part of the plan.”

Susie felt her legs go stiff. Something about Sonar's voice reminded her of the days when her father would catch her getting into mischief at the palace. "I... was... going solo?"

In the midst of deadly peril, Sonar always seemed to manage to keep a cocky smile on his face. But there wasn't a hint of his usual joy. "But... you always say we're not supposed to go solo."

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Susie sat at the head of the table with the rest of the active Freedom Fighters.

Anthonus "the Jackal" d'Chacal paced nervously around the table, waving his hands for emphasis, in his distinctively French manner. *"Sacre bleu!* Susie, how could you? You really went charging into one of Mechanik's facilities alone... and without telling us the plan? What were you thinking?"

Susie buried her face in her hand. "I... I just wasn't thinking, Anthonus."

Bonnie the Cyborg-Hare held up the index finger of her robotic left arm to catch Susie's eye. "Hold on, Sugar-cube. That ain't like you. You always think things out. That's why you're our leader. You must have had a plan."

Susie stammered, cringing at the thought of her own hypocrisy. “It was... a stupid idea. I figured if I just snuck in and out, I’d have plenty of time to try something, before meeting up with Sonar.”

Boomer the Sea-cow leaned forward in his seat. “To try what exactly?”

Susie sighed. “I was going to try and hack into Mechanik’s personal computer system. If it had worked, we could have gotten crucial intelligence, maybe even shut him down entirely, in one fell swoop.”

Anthonus suddenly shifted from stern-faced to love-sick. “Oh! Susie? That is brilliant! Of course, you had a good reason! You risked your own life, foolishly perhaps, but also gallantly, to save us all from Mechanik! It worked, of course! ... It *did* work, did it not?”

Susie hung her head. “...Not.”

Anthonus immediately switched to howling with despair, before swooning onto Bonnie’s shoulder. *“C'est impossible!* My beloved Princess nearly got captured... and all this stress for nothing? My life is *still* in peril! *Pauvre de moi!”*

Bonnie casually patted the unconscious Anthonus on the back of his head, but kept her eyes fixed on Susie. “Susie, honey, I’m just happy we all made it back in one piece. I don’t care that the plan didn’t work... But you should have *told us* the plan. How many

times have you had to rein in Sonar, when he wanted to run off alone, hotdoggin' it?"

Susie glanced at Sonar. He was sitting on the windowsill, turning away from her to gaze at the waxing moon.

Susie sighed. "More times than I can count."

Boomer frowned. "Then you should have known better. We need you to keep a cool head to direct us in the field. We can't run most operations without your programming skills. If you got captured Susie... I don't think the Freedom Fighters could ever recover."

Susie felt hot anger burning in her stomach, but not at her team. She was only angry at herself. "I know that, Boomer... I'm so sorry, everyone. I've failed you as a leader."

Bonnie shook her head, still cradling Anthonus in her arms like a mother holding a baby. "We're all still in the fight, shug. You haven't failed yet... You just missed the mark today."

Boomer folded his arms. "That's a *delicate* way to put it... Let's wrap up for the night. Susie, think hard about what happened today."

Slowly, they all stood up and left the room. Sonar finally stepped off the window sill and faced Susie. "We should check on Taylor. Make sure he's down for the night."

“Um, actually...” A door creaked open, and Taylor peeped his head into the room. “... I kinda overheard the arguing. Aunt Susie, are you in big trouble?”

With sorrow in her heart, Susie glanced at Sonar, then turned to face Taylor. “In a way, Taylor. I broke an important rule. You know how I always tell you not to leave Knothole Village alone? Well, I ran off alone, without telling anyone.”

“But you’re a Freedom Fighter. You guys are heroes! Don’t you have to fight whole armies of bad guys all the time?”

Susie shook her head. “Real life isn’t like that. There are times we have to fight alone, because we have no other choice. But I *did* have a choice. And what I did was wrong. Listen carefully, Taylor... I never want you to do something like what I did today. Running off to fight alone, without telling anyone, is not brave. I should have asked the others for help. Does that make sense?”

Taylor nodded. “Yes, Susie. I understand... Sonar, are you still mad at Susie?”

Sonar glanced at Susie, before he ruffled Taylor's hair. “Aw, I can never stay mad at Suz. Hey, why don’t I read you some *Flash* comics for your bedtime story tonight?”

Taylor giggled as he playfully wrestled free from Sonar, before turning to Susie, looking pensive. “Aunt Susie, if you feel bad about what you did... maybe you should go to your room, and think about it for a while? That’s what my parents used to tell me to do, when I did something wrong.”

Sonar put an arm around Taylor's shoulder. “You mean a timeout? I thought you said your parents used to spank you?”

Taylor rolled his eyes. “Yeah, when I did something really, *really* wrong, I got spanked. But when I only did something a little wrong, I just got a timeout. ”

“Huh, that’s weird. I usually got a quick spanking for doing something a little wrong. But if I did something really, *really* wrong, I got put in timeout... man, I *hated* timeouts.”

“It’s too bad we couldn’t switch parents!”

“Are you kidding? Then I’d be the one getting timeouts all the time and you’d be the one getting spanked all the time.”

“Oh yeah! Now that you say it, that makes sense!”

Susie watched Sonar and Taylor disappear into Taylor's bedroom, arm-in-arm.

Hanging her head, Susie made her way to her own room, and sat on her bed. Glancing at a portrait of her father, she wondered what he would say if he were here now. But she knew the answer.

When it was clear that little Susie had done something wrong, the time for lecturing would be over. King Apricorn wouldn't have said anything. He'd have silently arrived at Susie's room before bedtime, carefully bent her over his knee, and spanked her soundly, until she shed tears of true remorse.

King Apricorn almost never spanked Princess Susie as a child. But Susie knew she had most definitely earned every spanking she ever got from King Apricorn, without exception.

Susie glanced at the family portrait of her extended family: King and Queen Apricorn, her kid brother Elias, along with Sir Charles Needle-mouse, Jules and Bernadette Needle-mouse, and their three children, including Sonar. Except for Sonar, everyone else had been missing since the day of Mechanik's coup. Susie picked up the photo and traced a finger against the image of Sonar, as if stroking his cheek.

"I've let you all down."

Just then, there was a soft knock on her door, and Susie heard Sonar's muffled voice from outside. "Suz, can I come in?"

Susie's heart skipped a beat, and she quickly got up to open the door. But she hesitated as she reached for the door handle. She could never resist teasing Sonar, just a little. “Gee, Sonar, I dunno. *Can* you come in?”

“Well, har dee har, har. *May* I come in, *Princess* Susie of House Apricorn?

Susie held up her nose as she gracefully opened the door, but she couldn’t hide her smile. “Yes you may, Sir Sonar *Maurice* Needle-mouse.”

Sonar crossed his arms, a small smile on his face. “I just wanted to check on you... You okay?”

Susie exhaled, then sat on the edge of her bed. “Thanks, Sonar. I'm okay, I guess. Just feeling a little down about everything.”

Brushing her bangs from her eyes, Susie glanced at Sonar, looking downcast. “I suppose you’re here to give me a good tongue lashing?”

Sonar shrugged as he sat down next to her. “Eh, who am I to judge? I’ve screwed up on plenty of missions...”

Sonar and Susie’s eyes met, then they both looked away from each other. Sonar crossed his arms and tapped his foot, his eternal nervous tic. “Just... don’t be afraid to tell us if you’ve got another big

idea. Don't pull a crazy 'Sonar stunt.' The team's already got one of me. We can't handle any more 'Sonar stunts.'"

Susie shook her head. "You're too hard on yourself, Sonar. I can spend weeks planning an operation, only for Mechanik to be two steps ahead of me. I wish I could think on my feet the way you do."

"Then let us help you do the foot-work next time you've got one of your crazy 'Susie ideas.' You know, the ones that might just actually work! That's what friends are for, right?"

Susie sighed. "You're right, Sonar. I'll remember that next time... I just wish my father was here."

Sonar rubbed his head. "Yeah... he was better at this stern talking to stuff. Remember when we knocked over every single suit of armor in the palace?"

Susie giggled. "Do I ever! He took me straight to my bedroom, grabbed Mother's old wooden hairbrush and–"

She paused, glancing at the very same wooden hairbrush, lying on the bed table. "–and, uh, brushed my hair... Yeah, and then he gave me a stern talking to... but he always knew exactly what to say, when I was in trouble."

Sonar grinned, looking nostalgic. “Yeah, my ma was the same way. When she found out what I did, she was ready to ground me for a week. But lucky for me, Uncle Chaz managed to convince her to let me off with just a spanking.”

Susie’s eyes popped open. “Your mother… really spanked you? I had no idea!”

Sonar jabbed this thumb into his chest. “Heck yeah! She did a pretty good job, too. I definitely learned my lesson about not body slamming Princesses into solid steel, no matter how snooty they are.”

Susie stuck her nose in the air. “I am *not* snooty. And you did not beat me up. I was winning that fight fair and square.”

Sonar held up his hands in mock surrender. “Hey, I already promised never to use illegal wrestling moves on you ever again. And looking back, it was totally my fault. I’m glad your dad didn’t spank you or anything.”

Susie rubbed her shoulder. “Actually… I’m kinda glad he *did* spank me. I was just as much to blame as you for starting that fight.”

Sonar froze for a whole, entire two seconds. “Wait, you got spankings? But… you’re a princess.”

Susie pouted. “What’s that got to do with it?”

“Don’t Princesses have, like, servants who get spanked for them?”

“That’s nonsense! Of course we get spanked! How else are we supposed to learn the discipline needed to rule a kingdom?”

Sonar stroked his chin, then grinned mischievously. “Makes sense! So... did you get spanked a lot?”

Susie blushed as she gripped the bed, before relaxing slightly. “Well... not very often. Dad said he’d never spank me for making a simple mistake. I really had to screw up... I remember once, when I was seven, I decided to climb up to the highest tower in the castle. I thought it would be fun to sit on the stone battlements and see the view. But even though my parents had forbidden me to do so... I did it anyway.”

Folding her hands onto her lap, Susie turned to face Sonar. “Then I heard a noise and thought someone would tell on me. I was so scared, I stood up too quickly, and almost slipped and fell off the tower. I could have been seriously hurt, or even killed. But my father saved me. He was the person I heard coming...”

Susie grabbed at the hairbrush on her bedtable, and offered it up to Sonar to examine. “He was so angry with me at first... but then he calmly told me to go to my room, and wait for him. When he finally

came calling... he spanked me long and hard, without saying a word. First with his hand, then again with this hairbrush. My bottom was so sore, I had to sit on a pillow while I sat in the corner for timeout."

Sonar winced. "Wow, that sounds pretty rough. Your old man didn't mess around."

Susie shook her head, then smiled. "But when it was all over, he stayed and comforted me until I had cried out all my tears. And after that, we started talking walks up to the top of the tower, to watch the sunset... together."

"I'm sorry you had to go through that, Suz... but it sounds like things worked out in the end. Do you think King Apricorn did the right thing, ya know, by spanking you?"

Susie chewed over the question. Finally, she nodded. "Yes. It's a painful memory for me... But it's also a precious one. I never took such a foolhardy risk ever again... until today."

Sonar put a hand on Susie's shoulder. "Then remember what your dad taught you, and I'm sure you won't forget again. Wherever King Apricorn is, I know he's proud of you, Suz."

Sonar stood, and opened the window. Susie wondered what he could be up to, until she noticed him putting his foot on the window sill. As she realized Sonar was about to run off, Susie leapt

from the bed, reaching out her hand to snatch Sonar by the wrist. "Wait, Sonar! Don't go yet! I need you!"

Sonar froze right in the middle of making his dramatic exit. "Huh? What's up, Suz? I thought we had a good talk. Don't you need to get to bed?"

Realizing she was holding Sonar's hand, Susie quickly let go and stood at attention, her hands reflexively covering her bottom. "Sonar Maurice Needle-mouse, since King Apricorn is not here to guide me... and provide me with proper discipline... I must ask you to punish me in his stead."

Sonar blinked. "You want me to put you in timeout?"

Clutching her bottom tight with both hands, Susie trembled with a mix of fear and humiliation. "Sonar... please, don't make me spell it out..."

Sonar crawled off the window sill. "No way... You really want me to spank you, Suz?"

Susie grimaced, and forced herself to say the dreaded words she'd been thinking out loud. "No, Sonar... I *need* you to spank me."

End of Chapter I

## Chapter II: Spanking Susie Silly

Sonar froze. Then he started waving his hands. “What? Are you crazy? There’s no way I’m gonna spank you, Susie.”

Susie, who had been looking thoroughly ashamed of herself, suddenly rediscovered her royal voice of authority. “But, Sonar… you have to! I hid my plans from the team. I ran off into danger alone. I jeopardized everyone in Knothole Village. A princess has to take responsibility for all her decisions.”

“But you’re not just a princess! You’re my friend. And friends don’t hit friends.”

Susie put her hands on her hips. “Hmph! We hit each other all the time as kids.”

Sonar slapped his forehead. “That was different! We were just horsing around.”

With a cool smile, Susie narrowed her eyes. “And what about the time you challenged me to a race around the palace… and said the winner got to spank the loser?”

Sonar groaned. “Okay, okay! I know I was a stupid, troublemaking rapscallion as a kid! But you’re asking me to... hurt you? That’s no good!”

Susie stepped close to sonic and held his hands. “No, Sonar. That’s not it. I don’t want you to hurt me. I’m asking you to hold me accountable.”

Sonar gave Susie a perfect, deadpan look. “By slapping your rear end, repeatedly, until it hurts a bunch? Sounds like a fun little picnic!”

Susie hunched her shoulders. “It’s not *supposed* to be fun. It’s supposed to correct me. Please, Sonar... if my father was here, I’d ask him to do his duty and spank me again. But without my daddy, I don’t know what to do. Please...”

Trembling, Susie laid her head on Sonar’s shoulder. “Spank me, Sonar the Needle-mouse. You are my only hope.”

Sonar sighed, and hugged Susie, giving her a pat on the back of her shoulder. “All right, I’ll do it. But only on one condition: you’ve got to tell me to stop, the moment you know you’ve been spanked enough.”

Susie frowned and tried to pull back from Sonar to wave a finger at him, but he held her just firmly enough. As she resisted, she found she didn’t want to break off from the tender embrace. “But... Sonar!

What's the point of the spanking if *I'm* the one who gets to stop it the moment it starts to hurt?"

"The point is to protect you, Susie."

"My father would never let me decide when my spanking was over when I was little."

"Well, I'm not your father, and you're not a kid anymore. How many spanks did King Apricorn usually give you?"

Susie swallowed as she recalled her memories of being spanked. "Well... it depended on what I did. Anywhere from ten to one hundred swats with his hand, for ordinary misbehavior. If I was being an incorrigible brat, he usually added twenty extra spanks with Mom's hairbrush. But for something really bad, like when I disobeyed and put my life in danger... it might have been more."

Sonar looked stern. "So, how many spanks do I have to give you for what you did today, Suz?"

Susie sank back onto Sonar's shoulder, her arms drooping to hug him along his lower back. "I don't know. A lot more than what I got as a kid, that's for sure. At my age, I should have known better. That's why I want you to decide, Sonar."

“Then I am going to spank you until you tell me you’ve had enough, and no more. That is my decision.”

Pouting, Susie pressed her lips against Sonar’s shoulder. “But… but I need a *real* spanking. It shouldn’t matter if I struggle, or plead, or cry my heart out. I don’t want you to stop just because I’m whining, or because I shout ‘No!’ or ‘Stop!’ by mistake.”

“Then let’s have a word we agree on. Sort of like a code word for trouble. That way, you can be as big a crybaby as you want, and I’ll know to just listen to listen for the word.”

Susie straightened to her full height, and narrowed her eyes. While standing, she was a full inch taller than Sonar. “Crybaby?”

“Nah, that’s no good. It’s gotta be something that’s easy for both of us to remember. What’s a word you’ll never forget?”

Susie took a slow breath. She remembered her father’s affectionate pet name for her, ever since she was little. Last time, when he had finished spanking her, King Apricorn had called her “my silly little Bean,” to comfort her. She wanted more than anything to hear him call her that again.

Susie looked Sonar in the eye with firm resolve. “Bean.”

Sonar raised an eyebrow. “As in, beans, beans, the musical fruit? The kind you put on chilli dogs?”

“Can you take anything seriously for more than three seconds, Sonar?”

“Sure. Time me. I think it’s a great code word. I love beans, so I’ll never forget it. You sure you can remember it, Silly-Susie Bean?”

Susie tilted her head. “Positive. Not that I'll ever need it. I’d rather legally change my name to ‘Silly-Susie Bean’ than let you beat me in a contest of wills, Sonar Maurice Needle-mouse. In fact, just to make it interesting…”

Susie jabbed her thumb into her chest. “… If I cave and use the code word, before your arm wears out, I’ll admit I’m *your* ‘silly little Bean.’ I’ll even permit you to call me that, as my official nickname.”

“Really? Forever and ever? I get to call you ‘Princess Silly Bean,’ even in front of all the Freedom Fighters?”

Susie’s fur stood on end as she considered the implications of her little dare. But Susie couldn’t bear to back down from a challenge. “That’s right. If you win, I will answer to the name ‘Silly Little Bean,’ for as long as you want.”

Sonar grinned slyly. “And what happens to me if you win?”

“Nothing. I just get bragging rights.”

Sonar nodded. “Worth the risk. You’re on, Suz.”

Then he took Susie by the hand and led her toward her bed. Susie’s heart fluttered as she realized Sonar had taken charge of the situation. “What? Right now? Aren’t you going to lecture me, and stuff?”

Sonar sat on Susie’s bed, and with a light tug, he easily guided her across his left leg, bottoms up. “I *hate* lectures… Always been more of a *hands-on* learner.”

Susie huffed as she felt herself stumble and flop into place. Something about the ease with which Sonar had taken her in hand, along with how gently he’d caught her as she stumbled forward, helped Susie relax slightly. But she felt her fluffy tail shivering behind her. “Ooph! Hey, I didn’t tell you to start. Don’t forget, I’m still a Prin–”

Sonar landed a firm slap across Princess Susie’s royal rump. Susie’s hair stood on end and she clenched her fists. “Yipe! Sonar! Cut it—ow! Ouch!”

After delivering the second spank, Sonar shook his head. “No. If you want to stop, the word is ‘bean.’ Don’t forget, Suz.”

Then Sonar began to spank at what *he* considered a slow, steady pace, but Sonar's idea of slow and steady was about three spanks per second, all with equal force. Susie set her jaw as she felt the spanking begin in earnest, trying to rationally process what was happening to her. Already, Sonar had grabbed her full attention.

King Apricorn had always preferred a more 'slow-burn' approach, but as Susie focused her thoughts, she found she could successfully block out the rising sting. The rhythm of the spanking was faster than Susie was used to, but she soon realized that Sonar lacked the same strength and control as King Apricorn.

*"Typical of Sonar,"* thought Susie. After all, Sonar was famous for his mercurial speed of foot, not his herculean strength of arm. Susie winced, reflexively sinking her weight forward onto the mattress, only to angle her bottom up higher to receive further chastisement. "Gah! Don't hold back, Sonar. I'm not a little girl anymore."

Without skipping a beat, Sonar landed a significantly firmer spank, with more follow through, then right back to the briskly-paced spanking style. "I know."

When she felt the harder spank, Susie nearly shouted from surprise, but swallowed it before it could escape her throat. She wiggled her feet once, then set them down on the floor to steady herself. Taking

steady, controlled breaths, Susie resolved to not give Sonar a single excuse to tease her.

Digging in her heels, Susie straightened her legs and raised her hips, deliberately offering Sonar a better target. Sonar carried on spanking at the exact same pace, aiming the next set of swats across Susie's lower butt cheeks.

Susie endured at least twenty slaps in this position, before another extra-hard spank caught her by surprise and she was forced to settle her weight back down across Sonar's leg. Her legs kicked up reflexively at the knees, but she pressed her boots together to resist the urge to shield her bottom. Since early childhood, Susie had carefully learned the arts of mental self-control and physical endurance, both fundamental skills for her duties as a princess.

Susie felt her pulse rising, like she was running a foot race against Sonar himself, and was actually keeping up. As the stinging sensation rose a steady, warm buzz all across her bottom, Susie had to admit, Sonar could deliver a pretty good spanking. If Susie was still a little girl, she knew this spanking would have already had her in tears.

But so far, it was more like the burn of a good workout. No pain, no gain. In a way, it was almost pleasant. As Susie's mind became preoccupied by the discomforting heat building deep in her seat, she remembered her stupid, foolhardy actions that day. Susie grimaced,

and told herself that she deserved every single spank she was getting, and plenty more.

Just as Susie started to worry that Sonar might hear her soft grunts and hisses, Sonar paused. Susie blinked, and though her eyes were slightly watery, she knew she was nowhere near being forced to shed tears. She had learned long ago: a Princess must be able to resist crying when needed, to never weep unless she was alone, or at least only in the presence of those she could trust completely.

As Sonar stood Susie up on her feet, she felt a tangled mix of emotions, like a knot in her stomach. She was most certainly happy for the break. Nevertheless, Susie knew Sonar was letting her off far too easily. Inhaling sharply, Susie looked down to look Sonar in the eye. "Thank you, Sonar, but I'm afraid that alone won't serve as a suitable punishment. You'll have to do better than–"

Sonar whistled, and stretched his right arm. "Phew! That gave my right arm a good workout."

Susie bent slightly, waving a finger at Sonar's nose. "Please, *don't* tell me your arm is getting tired already, Sonar. How many was that? I don't suppose you kept count."

"That was exactly one hundred spankings. You mentioned that's about how many ole' King A used to give you, so I figured that

would be a good number for a warm up... Now that you mention it, my arm *is* getting a bit worn out... But don't worry!"

Sonar snatched Susie by her wrist, mid finger-wag, and pulled her across his right leg, just as easily as he'd pulled her across his left leg earlier. Sonar raised his left hand high. "I'm ambidextrous."

Susie woophed as she tumbled right back into the mirror-image of her previous spanking position. "Woopffh! Sonar! What are you up—tooo-hooooo?!?"

Susie gasped as she felt the first spank of round two.

As Sonar fell right back into his quick-march rhythm, Susie writhed in place, twisting her hips between each slap. "Argh! Sonar! I am talking to you, mister!"

Sonar chuckled, though there was no hint of cruelty in his distinctive, musical laugh. "Ah ha ha haw! ... Nah! You don't need any more brow beating today, Suz. Just a bun beating!"

Susie twisted to glare at Sonar, before the next set of spanks snapped her out of lecture-mode. "Sonar! Maurice! Needle-mou—OW! Ow, ow, ow! Yeeow!"

With a strained gasp, Susie turned away from Sonar and concentrated on her controlled breathing technique. The smarting

sting of each fresh slap, combined with the cumulative effect of the previous spanking, required Susie's full focus to block out.

Rationally, she guessed Sonar's plan. He would give her another hundred spanks in this position, then pause again. She's already lost count, but the knowledge she only had to endure a specific number made it easier to keep her composure. Susie kicked her feet against the bottom of the bed, in a desperate effort to keep them away from her bottom.

Then, with a single, fluid motion, Sonar hooked Susie's knees in place between his legs and carried out the rest of the hand spanking, all without missing a beat.

Susie seethed as she felt her legs hooked in place. Between the rapid spanks, she managed to choke out a few words at a time. "Don't... need you... to hold me... I can hold still!"

"And... one hundred. Great job taking the warm up, Suz."

Sonar scooped Susie under her armpits, and set her on her feet. This time, as Susie tried to straighten her posture, she felt a twinge of protest from her behind, and slouched slightly. She held her fists tight against her waist to resist the urge to hold her bottom in front of Sonar. "Sonar! This is ridiculous! I know I asked you for this spanking, but could you *please* give me three seconds to think?"

Sonar tapped his foot. “Okay… one-thousand *one*… one-thousand *two*…”

Susie stiffened, and held up her hands. “Figuratively! Not literally!”

Sonar sighed. “All right, Suz… What’s on your mind? If you’ve got something to get off your chest, now’s the time.”

Ignoring the angry prickling that covered her entire posterior, Susie forced herself to stand tall, head held high. “I suppose you’re planning to use the wooden hairbrush next. Since I usually got twenty strokes with the hairbrush as a child, I expect to get at least forty now. And you need to give me good, hard whacks, or there’s no point. Try to follow through on your swing more, like you’re swinging a baseball bat.”

“And your butt’s the ball?”

Susie sniffed, incensed at the blunt reference to her delicate, royal hindquarters. “Precisely.”

Sonar pointed to the end table. “Then go fetch me the hairbrush, and we’ll get cooking.”

Resting her hands on her hips, Susie pursed her lips into a prim and proper princess pout. “Despite my present circumstances, you would do well to remember that I am still the Crown Princess of

Mobius. A daughter of royalty ought not to be bossed around so casually."

"Suz, you've always said you don't want us to worry about you being a Princess anymore. Not until we've taken down butt-nik once and for all. We made you our leader because you're the only one with a head for strategy, and we all know it."

Susie tossed her head back, resting in a graceful, contraposto pose, as if she was posing for a royal portrait. "That is *also* true. I didn't want to be made the leader based on my royal heritage. But the whole reason I've asked you to do this is *because* I'm a princess. This punishment is difficult enough to endure. I promised to accept this spanking, but I will not abide any affront to my dignity."

Sonar scratched his scalp. "... Because I asked you to grab me the hairbrush?"

Susie shook her head. "No, because you *told me* to grab the hairbrush for you."

A lightbulb appeared over Sonar's head. "Aah-ha! I get it. You want me to be more of a gentleman about it."

Susie sighed softly. "If you would, Sir Sonar, I would be eternally grateful."

“Aces. In that case, I’ll get it for you!”

There was a blur of motion, and in the time it took for Susie to blink, Sonar zipped to collect the hairbrush, and appeared right back before her, slapping the smooth wooden surface against the back of his hand. “Now, let’s finish your spanking, Your Highness… Please.”

Susie had been expecting Sonar to ask her to fetch the hairbrush again. All she wanted was for him to be more polite about it. Instead, she found herself being tugged right back across Sonar’s left leg without warning. Only when she heard Sonar say the word, “Please,” did Susie mentally register that she had been bent over the knee again. “Wah?”

Sonar delivered a resounding spank with the hairbrush against Susie’s left buttock, swinging his whole arm with a paddling motion. Sonar still hadn’t learned to swim without inflatable safety floaties, but he had at least mastered the art of the breath stroke.

Susie’s pupils shrunk to pin pricks as she *heard* the thudding crack, before she felt the accompanying pain. “Waaah!”

Sonar delivered twenty blows, slowing down his absurdly quick pace only slightly. This time, he only delivered about two spanks per second, which Sonar thought of as an agonizing snail’s pace.

For Susie, it was equally agonizing, though for different reasons. Without having time to prepare herself, Susie couldn't resist the urge to whoop and holler between each and every stroke. Susie felt shining tears spring to her eyes, and blinked them back. *"No, a Princess must not cry in front of her subjects! Tears may only shed alone, or with those you can trust with your life!"* thought Susie, reciting the lesson she had learned as a child from memory.

Her parents had never told Susie that she was not allowed to cry. In fact, when they were alone, and Susie was distraught, they encouraged her gently, and let her weep on their shoulders. But they also had instilled her with the belief that there was a time and a place for shedding tears. Not in front of their subjects, who looked to them for guidance. And never in the presence of an enemy, who wished them harm.

Taking a faltering breath, Princess Susie willed her tears away. Her bottom was throbbing so badly, she didn't even realize the spanking was over, until she heard the creak of a door opening behind her. Susie twisted, and spotted Taylor peeking in the bedroom door. "Aunt Susie? I heard noises. What's going... on?"

Taylor threw open the door, and flew across the room to face Sonar, spinning his two tails like a helicopter blade to propel him forward. "No, Sonar! Don't you dare hit Susie! I know you're mad at her, but just give her a timeout instead!"

Sonar and Susie both leapt to their feet at once, waving their hands to shush Taylor. “No, no, no!” said both, at once.

Sonar put a hand on Taylor's shoulder. “It’s not like that, little buddy!”

Taylor pointed at the hairbrush in Sonar’s hand. “Then what’s that? You were spanking Susie’s bottom with that hairbrush! I saw it with my own eyes!”

In horror, Sonar stared at the damning evidence he held in his own hand, then hid the hairbrush behind his back, looking sheepish. “Well... you see, Taylor...”

Susie knelt to face Taylor. “Taylor, Sonar *is* going to put me in time out. But I *also* asked him to give me a spanking. I promise you, Sonar would never hit me, just because he was angry with me.”

Taylor raised his eyebrow. “You *asked* Sonar to give you a spanking?”

Susie nodded. “Yes, honey. Because that’s what my dad would have done, if he knew what I did wrong today.”

Taylor frowned. “But... you’re a Princess.”

“That’s true. But I’m also still a kid who makes mistakes, and I still have some growing up to do. That’s why I asked Sonar to help me… I’m so sorry we woke you up.”

Taylor shuffled his feet. “That’s okay… At first, I thought some of Mechanik’s spies were attacking. So, is your spanking all done, Aunt Susie?”

Sonar and Susie both blushed furiously as their eyes met, before quickly looking away from one another. Susie brushed her bangs from her eyes, and turned to face Taylor. “No, Taylor. I made a big mistake. So that means I need a big spanking. Sonar still has a job to do…”

Susie bit her lip, and as she glanced at Sonar, they both nodded in unison. Susie held Taylor's hand between hers. “Taylor, dear, would you like to stay and watch the rest of my spanking? That way, you’ll know that Sonar isn’t being mean to me.”

Sonar swallowed a lump in his throat. “… Um… I was kinda thinking…maybe we should…”

Taylor glanced at Sonar, grinning from ear to ear. “I didn’t think Sonar would ever be mean to anyone. I’m so glad I was right… But, even if you asked for this spanking, it still hurts, doesn’t it? I don’t think I want to see you get hurt, Susie. My tails are starting to tingle, just from thinking about it.”

Susie stroked Taylor's cheek. “Yes, Taylor. But I also want you to know I’m safe… and to see what happens to a foolish Princess who forgets to do the right thing. I want you to remember not to do what I did: mistake being brash for being brave.”

Taylor hung his head. “… I really don’t want to watch you get spanked, Aunt Susie… But I’m going to overhear it anyway. And besides…” Taylor pointed two fingers to his eyes, then pointed at Sonar. “… I think I’ll feel better if I keep an eye on Sonar. I know you’d never be mean to Susie, but… *if* you were being mean, I’d want to be here, so I can kick your butt.”

Sonar finally exhaled, then waved a finger with a cocky smile. “Taylor, if I’m *ever* mean to Suz, I hope you kick my butt too.”

Susie stood, and held Sonar’s hand in hers. “Then, let’s finish what we started. Sonar, please spank me.”

With a nervous glance at Taylor, Sonar led Susie back toward the bed. “Right… well, I was planning to give you twenty more swats with the hairbrush… and then be done, I hope.”

Susie shook her head, and whispered in Sonar’s ear. “No. That’s not what we agreed to. This is supposed to be a *proper* spanking. I don’t want Taylor to have any doubt in his mind about what happens to

hot dogs who let down the Freedom Fighters. The word is 'bean'..." Susie poked Sonar in the chest. "Don't forget, Sonar."

Taylor craned his neck. "What are you guys whispering about?"

Slowly, deliberately, Sonar gave Susie a look that said more than words ever could, and seated himself on the bed. "Susie's just bossing me around again. Remember, Taylor, I'm supposed to spank her pretty good, so that she remembers to never make the same mistake ever again. I don't enjoy doing this... it's just my job."

Taylor nodded, his whiskers bristling. "I understand. Do your job right, Sonar."

Just like before, Sonar guided Susie across his right leg, switching the hairbrush to his left hand. Susie was struck by the symmetry of it all. Soon, the red marks on her left and right buttock would match perfectly! Clearing his throat, Sonar tapped Susie's bottom with the hairbrush. "Twenty to go."

With a soft sniffle, Susie crossed her arms in front of her. "Assuming I don't earn extras thanks to my pure stubbornness!"

Sonar grinned as he raised the hairbrush high. "Please don't. My arm can't take much more!"

Susie was mentally prepared for the spanking from the moment it began. She endured the first six slaps with stony resolve. But something about talking to Taylor, and knowing he was a witness to her shame, made Susie hyper-conscious of her spanking. She didn't just feel the fresh pain. She could picture clearly in her mind's eye how absurd she must look, to both Taylor and Sonar.

By the tenth spank, Susie's response started to crumble. "Bah! Baaw! B-buh... bean..."

Unfortunately, she whispered the last word, and Sonar landed another four spanks, quickly reaching fourteen.

Choking on her tears, Susie waved her hand behind her. "B-Bean, bean, bean!"

Sonar checked his last stroke in the nick of time, with a sound like tires screeching to a halt. Sonar bent low to whisper in Susie's ear. "Suz? It's okay, Suz. No more."

But Susie shook her head, twisting to look at Sonar, her eyes' shining. She whispered urgently. "N-no. I just needed a moment to catch by breath. Please don't stop."

Taylor raised an eyebrow. "Bean? What's bean mean?"

Susie and Sonar glanced at Taylor. Sonar scratched his head. “Well... that’s quite a story... ya see...”

Susie quickly wiped her eyes dry, then twisted to look at Taylor. “It means... I’ve been a silly little bean.”

Taylor nodded. “That’s okay, Aunt Susie. We forgive you. Don’t we, Sonar?”

Sonar steeled his chest, and tapped the hairbrush against Susie’s bottom. “Of course we do. She may have acted like a silly little bean, but she’s still *our* silly little bean. Ain’t ya, Suz?”

Susie’s chest fluttered as she felt tears coming on, both from the relief she felt from Sonar’s playful encouragement, and from the nerves she felt at the thought of having to endorse six more strokes.

“That’s right, Sonar... and I still have six spanks to get through. Make them count.”

Taylor's eyes went wide, his tails shivering. “Wait, there’s more?!?”

Sonar tapped Susie’s bottom more firmly, finding his rhythm again. “Final stretch, Suz. You can do it.”

Susie fixed her eyes forward, and felt two spears spill down her cheeks. “Let’s do it, to it.”

Sonar delivered the final six strokes, even slower than before. He let one whole second pass between each spank, and Susie felt more tears budding, blurring her vision.

Susie squeaked, then squealed, then yelped, then shouted, then howled. And after the sixth stroke she wailed loud and long, and finally broke down, weeping freely.

Sonar set the hairbrush down and helped her up off his lap. Susie almost stepped off the bed, but at the last moment, she crawled to kneel on the bed in front of Sonar, pulling him into a hug as she sobbed on his shoulder. With Sonar seated and Susie kneeling, she was nearly a head taller than him.

Sonar patted Susie on the back of her head. “There, there. You’re my silly little bean.”

Susie blinked, and leaned back, rubbing her eyes. “I... I suppose that’s going to be my nickname forever now?”

She looked deep into Sonar’s eyes, feeling her tears burning on her cheeks. Finally, he grinned. “Hey, Taylor, you know how Susie called herself a silly little bean?”

When Taylor nodded, Sonar pointed an index finger. “That’s our little secret, okay? We don’t want to embarrass her in front of the other Freedom Fighters. That’s not a proper name for a princess.”

Susie stroked Sonar’s cheek, and guided his face to hers, until they were brushing nose-to-nose. “Maybe, but as long as it’s just between you, me, and Taylor... I’m still *your* silly little bean... From now on.”

Taylor sat beside them on the bed. “Is it finally over? Has Susie been spanked enough?”

Susie and Sonar’s eyes met, and Susie smiled with all her usual confidence. “Yes, Taylor. I’ve learned my lesson. Sonar did his duty as a knight, exactly as I expected of him.”

“Thank you, Princess. Your spanking is all over... but you’re still going to timeout.”

Susie tensed, then rounded on Sonar, giving him a cold stare from on high. “Excuse me?”

Without breaking off his gentle embrace, Sonar patted Susie across her behind. “Nope. You’re not excused quite yet. *You* were the one who told Taylor you had a time out coming, if you recall?”

Susie scrunched up her face, the playful love tap acting as a keen reminder of the lingering soreness across her entire bottom. “Eep!”

As she returned Sonar's tender hug, she addressed him with a formal tone of voice. "Why, yes... Now that you mention it, I *do* remember promising Taylor that I would be getting a time out... It will help me to meditate on the painful lesson I've learned today."

"That's a great idea, Suz. Really gets the ole noggin joggin'. So in that case... go set your stool in the corner, and have a seat. Nose against the wall.... Please."

Susie held her firm gaze, as if she was considering having Sonar clapped in irons and beheaded for treason. Then she surprised Sonar with a quick smooch, one on each cheek. "Yes, Sonar. Thank you for saying please... May I have a moment of privacy to change into my night dress?"

Sonar nodded. "Of course. Taylor let's have a look out the window."

Taylor scrunched his nose. "Huh? What's out the window?"

"Dude, Susie's changing into her pajamas. We're being gentlemen."

"Oh! Duh."

Susie winced as she stepped off the bed, every movement an agonizing reminder. Despite her thick fur, her bright red bottom

was practically glowing in the dark. First, she removed her blue vest, which was her singular item of clothing.

Nervously, Susie glanced behind her, suddenly bashful now that she was now slightly more naked than she always was. "No peeking! Right, boys?"

Sonar rocked back and forth on his heels, whistling. "Say, Taylor! What kind of moon is that, anyway? Almost looks like a full moon."

"That would be a waxing gibbous moon, Sonar."

"So, would that be the kind that's almost-but-not-quite-a-full moon? Or the kind you get after a full moon?"

"An almost-but-not-quite-a-full moon. That's what the 'waxing' part means in waxing gibbous. See how the shadow is on the left side? When it's dark on the right side, that means it's a waning moon."

"How do you *know* all this stuff, Taylor?"

"It's in my books."

With a snort, Susie turned and finished dressing in her favorite pink nightgown.

As she fetched her hard wooden stool, Susie reflected bitterly on how uncomfortable sitting on a freshly spanked booty was going to be.

She hesitated for a moment, glancing at the hard wooden seat and her own posterior, but she couldn't bring herself to bargain or complain. Not while Taylor was watching.

After taking a deep breath, Susie started to settle herself down. Then she heard a zip, and a soft *"Floomf!"* as she sat down fully on a soft pillow. Susie blinked as she noticed her seat was more comfortable than she expected. She twisted to find Sonar zipping back to his place beside Taylor at the window.

Sonar put a hand around Taylor's shoulder. "So... we'll probably get to see a full moon later this week?"

Taylor nodded. "Yup! Maybe even tomorrow night! Can I stay up a bit after bedtime?"

Sonar shrugged. "That's up to Aunt Susie."

Susie cleared her throat. "Ahem! I'm decent now, boys. Thank you for respecting my privacy."

Sonar and Taylor both turned, before Taylor stifled a yawn. “Whew! I’m sorry, Aunt Susie. I can’t keep my eyes open. Do you think your bottom will be okay by tomorrow?”

Susie chuckled. “As long as it’s still attached, I’m sure my bottom will be fine by then. Thank you for your concern, Taylor. May I have a goodnight kiss?”

Taylor flew through the air to hover at Susie’s side, and they kissed each other softly on the lips. Then Taylor added a second kiss on Susie’s nose. “Mwah! And there’s a silly kiss to help you feel better…”

Taylor landed back on the ground, then clung to his two tails as if they were his security blanket. “And Aunt Susie… don’t worry. I will never, ever, *ever* run off to fight alone, without telling anyone. I don’t even want to *think* about it.”

Susie gave Taylor one of his favorite “silly kisses,” right on the nose. “Thank you, Taylor. You’ve made my heart glad. Get some sleep, dear.”

As Sonar started to follow Taylor, casually wrapping his arms behind his head, Susie called after him. “Sonar? Would you stay with me? Just for a little while.”

Sonar turned, “Huh? Aren’t you going to go to bed?”

"Of course. After you let me out of timeout, silly."

Taylor groaned, then trundled toward his bedroom. "Poor Susie... don't keep her in timeout too long, okay, Sonar? She's had a long, rough day..."

As Taylor disappeared into the hallway, Sonar stood stiffly, with an expression that looked like he was being left to drown. "No worries, bro! I'll just make sure she gets..."

Taylor closed the door in Sonar's face. "... tucked in?"

Sonar turned to face Susie. "Uh... you're not gonna ask me to spank you again, are ya, Suz? I'd say you've been spanked enough for one night."

Susie kept her nose pressed firmly against the wall. "Yes, Sonar. For tonight at least. But as for asking you to spank me again... well, that depends entirely on whether I shape up my act. Wouldn't you agree?"

Sonar nodded curtly. "Sure, Suz. But that's not gonna be a problem, is it? You promised. No more hot dogging!"

"Yes, Sonar. I promise to never act so rashly again. I will put my trust in the other Freedom Fighters, until I've fully earned back their trust

in me. My word is my bond... But I may make other mistakes, and when I do..."

Susie peered coyly out of her corner. "I'll be glad to have a friend by my side, who can put up with me when I act like a silly little bean."

Sonar flashed a cocky smile. "So... how long is a *proper* time out supposed to be, Princess Silly Bean?"

Susie faced the corner again. "As long as you think I need to let the lesson sink in. And when you release me... I'd like to watch the moon with you, Sonar Maurice Needle-mouse."

The End

# *Whitney the Coywolf Spanks Tannie the Ring-tail:*

**Or:**

## *The Tangled Web, and The Whispered Promise*

In the quaint, rustic Spiral Hill Village nestled within lush green meadows, the athletic tomboy Tannie the Ring-tail and the silent sniper Whitney the Coywolf stood watch. They were guarding the village after a recent attack from the notorious Dr. Walrusman's army of robotic minions, known as Robo-Baddies. The night was serene, with the moon illuminating the village in a soft glow.

Tannie, as usual, was bored out of her mind. She was pacing back and forth, her tail twitching. “Ugh, this is so pointless. What could those stupid Robo-Baddies do now? We already defeated them once.”

Whitney, her face calm and composed as ever, replied in a soft, hushed tone, “This is important, Tannie. We need to be vigilant for Spiral Hill’s sake.”

Tannie rolled her eyes. “Yeah, yeah, whatever.”

Suddenly, the ring-tail's ears perked up. She thought she heard something rustling in the bushes nearby. Without a second thought, she dashed off to investigate, ignoring Whitney's whispered plea. "... Tannie? Wait! Be careful!"

As Tannie burst through the bushes, she saw two Robo-Baddies bumbling around in the clearing on the other side, seemingly lost. A wide grin spread across Tannie's face. "Finally, something to do!"

Tannie charging at them with her whip-like tail at the ready.

In a matter of seconds, the two Robo-Baddies were reduced to scrap metal. Tannie threw back her head and laughed. "Bah hah! That was too easy."

But as she turned to leave, she failed to notice a third Robo-Baddie lurking in the foliage behind her. It was a stealth fighter, equipped with a sniper laser. Slowly, the Robo-Baddie squeezed the trigger.

Just before it could shoot Tannie, a sharp crack rang through the air.

With two precise shots, Whitney fired her will-o-the-wisp-powered sniper rifle past Tannie. The first shot knocked the aim of the robot's gun off, so that the beam sizzled past Tannie's back, close enough to singe the fur on her tail. The second shot ripped through the Robo-Baddie's eye.

Feeling the heat of the laser blast, Tannie twisted around in a fighting pose, but could only stand there, stunned, as she watched the Robo-Baddie's head explode.

Shivering, Tannie forced a laugh. "Phew, that was close!"

But her laughter quickly died in her throat when she saw the look on Whitney's face. Her eyes blazing, Whitney raised a hand, and Tannie knew what was coming before it happened.

Whitney slapped her across her left cheek. And although Tannie's martial arts instincts were screaming to block it, Tannie flinched and accepted the blow rather than strike back against Whitney.

After a long second, Tannie opened an eye, half expecting to see Whitney winding up to slap her across the other cheek. Instead, she only saw Whitney lowering her trembling hand.

Tears were streaming down Whitney's cheeks. Her voice was so shaky, she could barely speak. "H-how could you be so careless with your life, Tannie?"

Tannie's heart sank. She had never seen her friend so upset before. Reflexively, Tannie rubbed her stinging left cheek, and found herself wishing Whitney actually *would* slap her again. "Whitney, I—Gosh, I'm so sorry—I didn't mean to worry you."

But Whitney couldn't bear to look at her. Wiping her eyes, the coywolf turned and walked away, leaving Tannie to wonder how she would make things right between them again.

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After reporting the sighting to the Resistance, Tannie and Whitney were relieved from their night watch and a scout squad was sent to patrol the woods for signs of enemy troops.

Later, they concluded that the three Robo-Baddies were merely stragglers from the Walrusman Empire's previous attack force.

Back in the quiet sanctuary of their humble abode, Tannie spoke in a flood. "Whitney, I'm so sorry for running off like that. I was foolish and reckless."

Whitney sat in silence. Tannie hung her head, her ears drooping.

Whitney looked equally downcast.

Finally, Whitney looked up, her eyes glistening with unshed tears, and their eyes met.

After another moment of tense silence, Whitney quickly wiped away a tear, and finally spoke, her voice barely above a whisper.

“Tannie, you ignored protocol and could have been killed. We're... supposed to work as a team, remember?”

Tannie nodded, her tail swishing back and forth in her agitation. “I know, I know! I let my impulsiveness get the better of me.”

Whitney took a deep breath, her hands trembling. “I can't lose another friend in battle, Tannie. I just... can't...” Her voice cracked, and she turned away from Tannie to look out the window.

Tannie’s heart ached as she watched her friend's vulnerability. She reached out to touch Whitney’s shoulder. “Whitney, I'm so sorry. I never meant to make you worry like that. You have to believe me.”

Whitney looked up, her eyes red-rimmed and her cheeks stained with tears. She smiled weakly, her voice low. “I believe you, Tannie. I'm sorry for losing my temper and slapping you earlier.”

Tannie shrugged, trying to lighten the mood with her usual sense of humor. “Eh, it was the least I deserved.”

Whitney's eyes narrowed, and she shook her head. “No, you didn't deserve that... I shouldn’t have slapped you across the face... I won’t do it again... Please forgive me?”

Tannie closed her eyes and pretended to stretch, resting her head against her arms jauntily. “Me? Forgive you? I’m the one who needs

forgiveness! Anyway, I got off easy! If my mom were here, she'd give me a good whoopin' with her tail."

Whitney held her head at an angle, perking her ears to make sure she heard right. "A whoopin'? What is whoopin'?"

Tannie's shit-eating grin vanished as her eyes popped open in surprise. "You know, a whipping? Uh... a spanking? You know what that is right?"

Whitney blinked once. Then a lightbulb seemed to appear over her head. "Oh! You mean corporal punishment!"

Whitney placed a thumb on her chin delicately, and seemed to quote from memory: "An act of slapping on the buttocks, as punishment, especially for children?"

Tannie nodded, feeling a strange mix of relief that Whitney actually understood her, combined with a nervous realization that she also seemed to have the dictionary definition memorized. "Yes! Exactly! When I was a kid, I used to get into all sorts of trouble! But if I ever disobeyed Mom or did something dangerous..."

Tannie bent over and pantomimed the act of spanking herself. "She'd pop me one, just like *this!* Then haul me back home for a long trip across her knee!"

Whitney nodded in agreement, her expression turning more serious. "I see... Your mother sounds like a wise lemur!"

Tannie beamed, landing another resounding slap on her own behind. "She's the best! I can't wait for you to meet her."

Whitney watched Tannie's demonstration with keen interest. "And do you think your mother was right to... spank you?"

Tannie chuckled, enjoying the attention. "Yup! Oh, back then, I was mad as a buzzer, but looking back on it now, I never got a spanking I didn't deserve!"

"You deserve one now, and I think you should get it."

Tannie's hand froze in mid-air, hovering above her own behind. "Uh, come again?"

Whitney fixed Tannie with a stare that was eerily reminiscent of Mrs. the Ring-tail. "Your mother used to give you a... whoopin' for disobedience and putting yourself in needless danger. You say she did the right thing by spanking you. I agree. It is a fair punishment for disregarding protocol and risking your life."

Tannie gulped, her bravado faltering as she realized that Whitney wasn't joking. "But, Whitney, I was just a kid back then. I'm too old for a spanking now!"

Whitney cocked her head in the other direction, puzzled. “Why should that make a difference? If anything, you deserve a spanking more now that you’re older and should know better.”

Tannie straightened up from her imaginary spanking position, and reflexively covered her bottom, suddenly aware of how vulnerable it always felt when she was facing Mom’s wrath back in the day.

Whitney watched in silence as Tannie covered her bottom nervously. It was clear that Whitney had no intention of grabbing her.

Although Whitney was a talented marksman, Tannie knew that she was the superior hand-to-hand fighter. There was no way Whitney could bend Tannie over her knee unwillingly.

As she looked into her quiet friend’s eyes, Tannie read the silent expectation in them. Whitney was waiting for Tannie to accept her spanking... willingly.

Tannie looked aside, too embarrassed to look her friend in the eye. She felt no different now then she did when she was a little kid, in precisely this same situation. “Please forgive me, Whitney. I promise I'll never do anything like that again... You can spank me if you think it’ll help.”

Whitney's eyes softened, and she placed a gentle hand on Tannie's shoulder. "I've already forgiven you, Tannie."

She paused, her gaze unwavering. "But if I spank you, it's going to be for real. Are you sure you want to go through with this?"

Tannie swallowed hard, her nerves getting the best of her. But she knew that she had to make amends and prove to Whitney that she was truly sorry. "Yes, I'm sure. I'll accept whatever punishment you think I deserve."

Whitney nodded, then pulled a knife from her boot and offered it to Tannie, her expression resolute. "Then go to the forest and cut a bundle of switches. Bring them to the woodshed... I'll meet you there at dawn."

Tannie hesitated for a moment, her mind racing as she imagined the stinging pain that awaited her. But she took a deep breath and accepted the knife that Whitney offered. "I'll do it," she said, her voice wavering slightly.

As Tannie stepped out into the night, her thoughts drifted to the woodshed and the inevitable spanking that awaited her. She couldn't help but wonder if she had truly bitten off more than she could chew.

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“How many switches are there in a bundle, anyway?” Tannie mused out loud, as she cut another promising branch. She had about thirty, which seemed like too many.

Although Whitney had told her to take her time, Tannie knew she was stalling. Dawn would break soon, and she had to make her way to the woodshed. Tannie didn’t want to find out if Whitney considered tardiness an error worthy of additional corporal punishment.

Tannie made quick work whittling away leaves and stray twigs from the sturdy sticks. She recalled how Mom had once sent her to this very same wood to cut her own switch. On that occasion, little Tannie had tried tying her tail to the top of the weather vane to see if she could safely jump off the roof. It turned out that Tannie’s tail was more than strong enough to save her life, but her knot tying needed work. It had held just long enough for Mom to come racing over in a panic to catch her.

No sooner had Tannie plopped down, safe and sound, into Mrs. the Ring-tail’s arms, then she found herself draped across Mom’s lap for a safe-and-sound spanking. After a round of hand spanking as a warm up, little Tannie was given her father’s knife and sent to cut her very first switch for round two in the woodshed.

So, basically, grown-up Tannie had no trouble preparing a mean-looking bundle of birches, although she'd never tied a bundle before. She pulled athletic tape from her back pocket, and made an attempt as she walked toward the shed.

"At least my knot work has gotten better since then." Tannie usually tried to crack jokes to keep herself calm in a fight, but she found it didn't work so well now.

As the sun peeked over the horizon, Tannie wrapped her prehensile tail around the bundle to free her hands, and delivered a crisp slap to both of her own cheeks, as though psyching herself up for a sparring match. "No more dawdling! You can do this, Tannie!"

In her excitement, she burst open the door of the woodshed to make a grand entrance. "All right, Whitney! I'm ready for–" The old doorknob came loose and Tannie almost fumbled it, stumbling forward before looking back up to meet Whitney's steely gaze. "... My whoopin'?"

Whitney silently extended a paw to accept the birch bundle.

Unable to stand the silence, Tannie interjected, "If you want to keep 'em nice and supple, all you have to do is soak 'em in–"

But Tannie faltered as she saw Whitney neatly tuck the birch bundle into a jar of salt-water, which she had apparently prepared herself.

“Salt water? Huh, you sure know your stuff! But, it’ll take time for ‘em to soak! I guess we have time to chat about–”

The squeak of wood against wood interrupted Tannie’s train of thought. With wordless precision, Whitney dragged a short (but sturdy) wooden stool from underneath the table.

Suddenly nervous, Tannie continued to run her mouth. “Chat about… my behavior! We can talk about how sorry I am! Or, we can talk about anything, really! So, what is the deal with Sonar and Annie? Do you think they’ll ever get a clue and… um…”

Whitney seated herself down and patted her lap. Tannie immediately understood the wordless meaning: “Bend over.”

Tannie felt her feet shuffling towards Whitney’s lap, which seemed to loom large before her. “Oh! Er… Or we could start… right now! Uhh… don’t you want to wait for the switches to soak?”

Whitney seemed unphased by Tannie’s chatter. “They’ll need about thirty minutes.”

Tannie finally shut up as she put two and two together. Of course, before the birching, Whitney would be giving her a hand spanking as a warm-up… for thirty minutes? That was like the length of an entire Saturday-morning cartoon!

Whitney raised her right hand in a beckoning gesture to Tannie, while she slapped her lap with her left palm, slightly more insistently. “C’mon, Tannie. I know you’re not afraid of a little spanking.”

Tannie guffawed, then inhaled sharply, her chest swelling with pride at the compliment. But she was embarrassed to discover her limbs trembling. “Me? Afraid of a little spanking? Never! Why, I’ll have you know I can handle a great, big spanking! I’d be disappointed in anything less!”

Whitney answered in a neutral tone. “... I see. Then, I’ll try not to disappoint you, Tannie...”

Tannie felt every hair on her body, from the top of her head to the tip of her prehensile tail, stand on end. Whitney was always so deadpan, Tannie was never sure if she was serious or joking.

Wondering whether she had just talked herself into an even harder spanking than she was already going to get (and too embarrassed to admit as much) Tannie silently willed herself forward.

As Whitney grasped Tannie gently by the wrist and guided the lemur across her knees, Tannie suddenly felt... safe. It was like a dance: Tannie half tripped, half glided into position. It suddenly occurred to Tannie that Whitney’s words might have been not a threat, but a promise.

Tannie felt a gentle tug on her tail, as Whitney pulled it away from Tannie's bottom. Tannie realized with a thrill of humiliation that she had unconsciously been blocking it. Whitney gripped the tail firmly in her left hand, but not so tightly as to hurt Tannie, and raised her right hand silently.

Not noticing the hand of chastisement rising above her, Tannie felt oddly comfortable. It was somehow reassuring to be held so securely in place by her own tail, exactly like being a kid again.

Tannie was still musing on how Whitney would make a great mother as she glanced casually over her shoulder, only to see Whitney's arm raised high in the air, followed by a blinding blur.

"Wuh? Wait!"

*WHAP!*

Back when little Tannie was getting spankings during her wild, misspent youth, she'd grown used to having Mom or Dad deliver a long lecture before, during, and after her punishment. By skipping the usual ceremonies, Whitney had accidentally caught Tannie completely off guard.

Tannie felt her arms and legs buck in surprise, but with her tail held firmly in place, Tannie managed to catch herself, barely avoiding tumbling off Whitney's lap.

As the impact of the first spank rippled through Tannie's leggings, she felt the seriousness of Whitney's words: this spanking would most certainly not disappoint.

Whitney watched Tannie's limbs flail in surprise, and waited to feel Tannie steady herself on top of her lap before landing the second spank with equal strength, tracing a long arc through the air.

Tannie hummed, holding a shout in her throat, still trying to look cool. She remembered the time she'd let Sonar the Needle-mouse use her extending tail as an improvised weapon in the middle of a pitched battle. As it had snapped back into place like a rubber band, she had hidden her discomfort behind a grimace and gave her hero the thumbs up. That sensation was not unlike what she was experiencing now.

The surprise of the first two smacks from Whitney's palm had faded, and a burning sensation was replacing it. Tannie was sure that underneath her leggings and fur, two perfect, red handprints had already impressed themselves on each of her butt cheeks.

After making a striking first impression, Whitney fell into a slow, steady pattern of spanks, not quite as hard as the first two, but

meant to build a slow burn. Tannie found she could will herself to lie still without squirming and shouting, but that only meant that she had time to consider just how hard Whitney *could* spank her... and sooner or later, *would* spank her.

Whenever the topic of spanking came up, Tannie had always imagined spanking as something she had endured as a little kid, and had overcome. Sure, she'd cried her heart out back then, but that was because she was just a brat, at the mercy of Mommy or Daddy.

But now, big, tough, grown-up Tannie was finding a spanking from Whitney every bit as terrifying as a childhood spanking had ever been. Surely, her parents hadn't spanked her this hard? Not even her Dad!

While Mrs. the Ring-tail had taken the primary role of disciplinarian in the household, Mr. the Ring-tail was always willing to back his wife up.

On one occasion where little Tannie had defiantly, and untruthfully, told Mom her spankings didn't hurt at all, Dad had happily volunteered to take over. On that fateful day, little Tannie learned to be on her best behavior whenever Mom mentioned the possibility of "a spanking from Daddy!"

Maybe, in retrospect, Mom and Dad were taking it easy on her little behind. Maybe Whitney wasn't quite as strong as her Daddy. But

whatever the case, getting spanked by Whitney sure felt like "a spanking from Daddy."

Tightening her legs together to keep from kicking, and gripping the handles of the stool to keep her hands from flying to cover her bottom, Tannie's mind scrambled to find something to say, anything, to distract her from the growing discomfort. "Is that all you've got?"

As the ill-timed words seemed to echo in the shed, Tannie caught sight of Whitney the Coywolf narrowing her eyes.

Tannie let go of the legs of the stool and covered her mouth. It had just slipped out!

Normally, Whitney's withdrawn demeanor led people to underestimate her, but Tannie had long known that Whitney was a trained warrior, not someone to be trifled with.

Now, Tannie was keenly aware that Whitney was looking at her with the keen eyes of a wolf, a hunter eyeing its target.

And the target...

*SMACK!*

...was Tannie's backside!

Tannie felt her back arch, her right leg slipped off Whitney's lap, and she dropped her right hand to catch herself. Tannie would have tumbled straight to the dusty floor, but Whitney managed to catch her, and with only a small grunt of annoyance, hooked her leg across Tannie's right leg, pinning it in place. Tannie suddenly became aware of the asymmetry, her right butt cheek stretched taut, her left butt cheek bunched up.

As Whitney landed two full-strength spanks in quick succession, one to each cheek, Tannie's awareness of her own bottom formed a crystal clear picture in her mind. With her right leg scissored between Whitney's thighs, the spank against Tannie's right cheek almost seemed to bounce and spread across it like electricity. (It only "almost bounced," Tannie realized, because Whitney was determined to follow through against the firm, toned flesh.)

In contrast, Tannie's left butt cheek was relaxed, though her free left leg was kicking out straight behind her. When Whitney's second spank landed there, her palm sank into the flesh as though fluffing a pillow.

Realizing that Whitney had returned to her full strength, Tannie's mind started to race. *"This is because I taunted her!"*

Tannie desperately wanted to take back her words, but doing so would mean Tannie would have to admit she wasn't as tough as she

pretended to be. As she felt Whitney return to the slow and steady pace, Tannie tried to cover her mouth, this time to keep herself from crying for mercy.

If only Whitney would say something, say anything! A stern rebuke, even cruel mockery would be preferable to awaiting each spank in stony silence. Tannie sensed the tempo of the spanks gradually increasing again, and pressed her left palm firmly against her lips, barely stifling a war cry. As two tears finally formed at the corners of Tannie's eyes, she wondered how angry Whitney must be with her? *"What a stupid, greenhorn mistake to make on patrol!"*

Suddenly, the memory of Whitney's tears came crashing down on Tannie's head. She felt like a bad friend.

From Tannie's perspective, Whitney was inscrutable. A stern, stony icon of divine judgment.

But from Whitney's perspective, Tannie's resilience was astonishing. The wolf reminded herself of her promise to Tannie not to disappoint her with a wimpy spanking.

Over the years, Whitney had been told by many people that she was deaf to social cues. Since meeting Tannie, Whitney had finally started to come out of her shell and work as a team player again.

As a sniper, Whitney liked to look at problems rationally: to identify and apply the best strategic solution in any situation. Although Tannie had consented to be spanked, Whitney felt a pang of guilt. This was her idea, after all, and the memory of losing her temper with Tannie still haunted her. Whitney wished it was her bent over Tannie's knee.

But she had promised to spank Tannie properly, and she was determined to follow through, despite her misgivings that she was spanking too hard.

*"I don't want her to think I'm just a wimp!"* thought both Whitney and Tannie, as Whitney landed a quick spank to each of Tannie's upper thighs.

*"So, I'll have to give this my all!"* thought both Tannie and Whitney, as Whitney changed up the pattern and placement of the smacks again, quickening the pace from a half-march to a full-march. Tannie dropped her left hand from her mouth to steady herself as best she could.

The silence of the woodshed was broken only by the steady pattern of spanks, which had now reached a quick tempo, like a dance: "1-and-2-and-3-and-4-and...!"

As the pain of the spanking built up, Tannie felt a sudden desire to drop the tough-guy act. She wanted to shout out, "I'm sorry!" but

before she could, she felt her left leg lock. Slowly, she felt her calf muscle spasm and tighten. Eyes wide, Tannie squeaked, “It hurts!”

Wanting to be firm with Tannie, Whitney finally broke her silence, delivering crisp smacks without missing a beat. “It’s a spanking, Tannie. It’s supposed to hurt.”

Instinctively, Tannie slapped the floor with the palm of her hand, as though tapping out of a wrestling match. Her hips bucked up and down wildly as she felt the spasms travel up her leg. “No! Whoop!!! ... My leg—Whoa-hoo!”

Concerned, Whitney stopped the spanking immediately. Tannie felt herself dropping off Whitney’s lap and braced herself, only to find herself being lowered to the floor gently. She looked up to find Whitney pulling off her yellow sneakers.

As usual, Tannie’s tongue started moving of its own accord anytime she was flustered. “Yeah! Happens all the time. Serves me right for forgetting to stretch before some brisk, spanking exercise! Get it? Ha, ha! ... HOWCH!” As she laughed, the cramp flared up.

Whitney planted a gentle pat on the underside of Tannie’s upturned behind, before starting to gently massage the tensed calf muscle. “Hold still... silly.”

Tannie lay back, oddly soothed by the playful smack and the words, but still desperate to keep up appearances. “Silly? Me? Hey! I resemble that remark! Oooh!” Whitney moved the massage past Tannie’s calf, stroking along the rest of her leg and thigh. Tannie felt a fresh wave of heat from her bottom and wished Whitney would soothe her there as well.

Whitney flexed Tannie’s knee experimentally and gently set the foot back down. “There… try and move it now.”

Tannie pumped the leg in a bicycle motion, and immediately tried to hop back up. “No problem! Good as new! WOAH!” She wobbled dangerously as she landed on her shaky left leg and felt Whitney catch her. Tannie was taller than Whitney, but felt strangely reassured as she looked into Whitney’s eyes. Maybe, just maybe, she could talk her way out of the birching and…

Whitney’s look of motherly concern had been replaced by her steely gaze of maternal authority. “… Silly lemur!”

A sharp clap to Tannie’s right buttock from behind interrupted her thoughts, her tail reflexively shooting into the air as though making a salute. Realizing that she had gotten too excited, again, Tannie blushed and rubbed her behind with her prehensile tail. “Well, that was quite a spanking, Whitney. How long have we been at this? An hour? Surely the birches have had time to soak. Or, you know, we could take a break and–”

“Five minutes,” Whitney interrupted. She gestured behind her to where her sniper equipment was resting against the wall, always at the ready. The rifle glowed, and a will-o-the-wisp (a sentient ball of energy, and one of Whitney’s companions that powered her sniper rifle), flurried into sight. With a chirp of joy, the spirit reshaped its form to resemble an analog clock.

Tannie felt her nose twitch. They weren’t even to the halfway-point? No! Worse than that! They weren’t even halfway to the halfway-point! Sweating bullets, Tannie felt a button unsnap that held her sportswear in place under her tail. She glanced down to find Whitney gliding her thumbs into either side of Tannie’s black leggings, and snatched at the elastic band to hold them up. “Woah! Keep your pants on! ... I mean, keep *my* pants on!”

Whitney looked up at Tannie quizzically. “Oh? This is how I always got spanked as a child... Did your parents never pull down your pants?”

Tannie’s mouth twisted into a nervous smile. The answer, of course, was that her parents almost always “spanked in layers,” gradually removing one article of clothing at a time until young tangle was left bare-bottomed for a final round of discipline.

Sometimes there was corner-time, mouth soaping, it all depended on the offense. “Let the punishment fit the crime,” was the rule of the Ring-tail household.

Tannie realized that she had somehow avoided any mention of this relevant detail before now. Lies and half-truths sprang to her mind, but Tannie could never lie to Whitney while she was fixing her with her patented Mom Look. “Well… not all the time! Sometimes I got spanked over my pants or my dress, sometimes I got spanked over my undies, and sometimes I got spanked, well, over my bare butt. It was sort of a last resort when…” Tannie trailed off, knowing precisely where this was going and too embarrassed to admit it.

Whitney finished her sentence for her. “When you did something like lie, disobey, or endanger your life?”

Tannie shrugged her shoulders, but didn’t release her death-grip hold on her pants. “Pretty much!”

Whitney nodded, still wondering what the hold up was. “I see. That sounds like a fair rule, and it sounds like it worked. Thank you for telling me the truth, Tannie. That took guts.”

Tannie felt her heart skip a beat at the compliment. Sometimes, she wondered if Whitney looked down on her for being overly excitable and easily distracted. But Whitney continued speaking slowly, as though delivering a classroom lecture. “In that case, I will spank you

over your underpants for now, and when the birches have had time to soak we will finish your punishment with a switching on your bare bottom. ”

Tannie immediately understood. In Whitney’s mind, this was a simple matter of logical deduction. “If A is true, then B is true. If B is true, then C is true. A is true, ergo, C is true.”

Premise A: Whitney must punish Tannie for taking dangerous risks, just like Tannie’s parents used to punish her as a child.

Premise B: Tannie agrees that, as a child, her parents used to spank her on her bare bottom for taking dangerous risks.

Conclusion C: Whitney must spank Tannie on her bare bottom.

Tannie nodded, and with a sigh, adjusted her grip. Together, Tannie and Whitney glided down Tannie’s black leggings down past her knees, leaving the lemur bare-legged except for black socks and… Sonar the Needle-mouse underpants?

Whitney scrutinized them skeptically. “What are these markings? Did you steal these from Sonar?”

Tannie tensed at the thought of being spanked by Whitney for the crime of stealing Sonar the Needle-mouse’s underwear, all the more

since she was innocent. “No! They’re mine! Um, you’ve never heard of underoos?”

Whitney moved around Tannie to examine the mysterious undergarments. “They make such things? Mine are all white, or black, or gray. Isn’t that enough?”

Tannie blushed at the mental-image of Whitney in plain, unadorned lingerie, before shaking her head. “They’re… a good luck charm! I’ve had ‘em since Sonar first became a hero.”

Whitney cocked her ears playfully. “Ah! A token of admiration? Like my dog tags? Something to remind you of what you’re fighting for?”

If it was possible to sink through the floor and fall to the center of the earth from sheer embarrassment, Tannie would have done so by now. As it was, she instinctively put her hands behind her head in a gesture of surrender, just like Mom and Dad had taught her to do when this same scene had played out in childhood.

“Exactly… something nobody else knows about, but that’s always with me…” Tannie mumbled. As she felt her fingers interlaced behind her, Tannie felt a sudden surge of relief. She knew she could trust Whitney never to reveal this secret to anyone.

Whitney nodded, seemingly oblivious to Tannie’s internal dilemma. “Well, you’ve chosen a fine hero! I’m sure he’d be honored!”

As Whitney gently lifted Tannie's foot to pull her leggings off her feet, Tannie felt comforted by the gentle, motherly gesture, yet also irrationally nervous. "Do they have to come all the way off? It's chilly in here!"

Whitney answered in her typical dead-pan fashion as she relieved Tannie of the leggings, "I'll warm you up soon enough. Besides, you don't want to get your legs tangled up while I'm *tanning your hide*, do you?"

Tannie only nodded submissively, before doing a double take, barely containing a fit of laughter. "Wait. 'Tanning'? Was that your idea of a pun?"

Whitney answered with her unshakable poker face, before seating herself back down on the wooden stool. "I'll never tell."

Tannie felt the warmth and closeness of the moment vanish in a heartbeat. Her eyes flicked to the will-o-the-wisp, still in the form of a clock, and realized she had another fifteen minutes of uninterrupted spanking to look forward to. She'd just barely endured five minutes!

As Whitney patted her left knee, beckoning the condemned Tannie toward the chopping block, Tannie realized that it was now or never.

She could keep up the tough-guy act, or she could trust Whitney with the embarrassing truth: she was terrified!

But as Tannie stood obediently before her friend, her Sonar the Needle-mouse underoos exposed, Tannie found that it was somehow easier to be vulnerable. "Um... Whitney? Do you think, maybe, you could take it easy on me this time?"

Whitney cocked an eyebrow. "I promised you that if I spanked you, it would be for real. Just like your parents would have done it, remember?"

Tannie felt her lip tremble. "Well, yes, but I don't think my parents ever spanked me quite so hard... not even my dad!"

Whitney answered neutrally. "Really?"

Unable to read any hint of her fate in Whitney's expression, Tannie could only unburden her soul. "Yeah, just that warm up was probably the hardest spanking I ever got in my entire life! I... I don't think I'm tough enough for fifteen minutes of that, plus the birch."

Whitney nodded, and finally, finally cracked a smile. "That's a relief! Thank you for telling me, Tannie. After you asked me how hard I could spank, I was afraid I wasn't spanking you hard enough! Now I know I can hold back a bit. Did I hurt you?"

Tannie considered the stinging sensation that covered her posterior. "Well, it's a spanking! It's supposed to hurt, isn't it?"

Whitney returned to her serious tone. "Yes, but that doesn't mean I want to hurt you. You're my friend! This spanking is supposed to teach you to take your own safety more seriously! I'm spanking you because I don't want you to ever get hurt!"

Once again, Tannie felt herself drawn towards Whitney's lap, as though she belonged there. "Yes... I know that now... Please spank me, Whitney."

Whitney nodded, then with a quick gesture reached behind Tannie. The lemur thought Whitney was going to plant another warning slap on her behind, but instead, Whitney gently grasped Tannie's tail and pulled it forward, so that it wrapped halfway around Tannie's torso.

Not knowing what else to do, Tannie removed her hands from behind her head and grasped her own tail like a security blanket. So primal was her memory of habitually grasping her own tail as a child and sucking her thumb, Tannie had to stop herself from putting her thumb in her mouth in front of Whitney.

Tannie lowered herself onto Whitney's lap and allowed Whitney to guide her into position. This time, Tannie found herself balancing on Whitney's right knee, Tannie's long track-and-field-star legs

dangling to the floor on either side. Dimly, Tannie realized that this was why Whitney had ordered her to remove her leggings.

She lay forward across Whitney's right thigh, nervous that she would lose balance, but Whitney's right arm tucked Tannie firmly in place, waist-against-waist. With her legs spread apart, and her whole weight supported by Whitney, Tannie felt like a baby on her Mama's lap again, completely at the mercy of Whitney.

As she felt her bottom jiggle from three quick pats across her Sonar underoos, Tannie sniffled into her tail. She wanted to cry out an apology, a promise to be good. Instead, she sobbed, "Whitney? I... I love you!"

Whitney raised her left hand. "And I love you, Tannie."

With that, Whitney began Tannie's second round of spanking, not quite as severe as before. Tannie started to weep into her tail almost immediately, more from a sense of relief and gratitude than from the pain, but the heat gradually built until Tannie was kicking her socks and heaving to catch her breath between fresh sobs.

Tannie didn't sass or struggle. She only wanted to be spanked, until the scorching fire in her seat replaced even that singular thought with the reality of *being* spanked. The whole world seemed to fade away, leaving only Tannie's bottom and Whitney's hand in existence, each in its proper place. All was right in the universe.

It seemed to go on forever and ever, but part of Tannie never wanted it to stop. When she heard the sound of a cuckoo clock forming from the corner of the shed, Tannie suddenly snapped back to reality.

Whitney looked to her will-o-the-wisp calmly. “That’s thirty minutes. The birches should be ready now. Tannie, can you stand?”

Gradually becoming aware of the rest of her body, Tannie lifted herself up experimentally. She was sure her caboose must be glowing in the dark through her underoos. “It’s over already?”

Whitney flashed a wolfish grin as she retrieved the birch bundle, and shook loose the droplets of water. “No, silly lemur, it’s only just begun! Now, I need you to...”

Realizing what was next, Whitney cleared her throat. Tannie turned to see Whitney silently gesturing by pointing her finger down forcefully. Tannie raised an eyebrow, mischievously. “What are you trying to say, Whitney?”

Whitney could only blush, and repeat the pointing gesture, mouthing the words but too embarrassed to say them out loud.

Tannie grinned. “Are you trying to tell me to drop my britches and stick out my bottom?”

Whitney turned to face the corner, too embarrassed to answer, but managed to nod.

Tannie nodded, mutely. Now that she had accepted her fate, this interruption in her punishment felt surreal. Feeling the heat radiating from her bottom, Tannie knew that Whitney had been taking it easy on her.

The breather was over, and Tannie the Ring-tail had something to prove. Automatically, Tannie started to undress, pulling down the Sonar the Needle-mouse underoos, then taking off her sports jacket and black sweatshirt.

Exhaling, Whitney turned ready to find Tannie's bare behind facing her, only to find Tannie stripping nude. Whitney turned to face the wall, beet red, as though Tannie had sent her to stand in the corner like a naughty child.

Although it was common to see male Mobians in a state of undress, female Mobians traditionally wore human-style clothing, both for fashion statements and as a traditional symbol of feminine modesty. Whitney had never seen Tannie in this state before, covered only by her fur. "Tannie, what are you doing?"

Tannie shot a sly grin over her shoulder as she pulled her sports bra up and over her head, and shot back, matter-of-factly. “We agreed the last part of my spanking would be on my bare booty!”

“Yeah, bare butt! Not bare everything!”

Tannie straightened her back, enjoying the rare moment of liberation from clothing. Tying her tail around her waist like a belt, she wondered if this was how the guys felt all the time? “Let the punishment fit the crime! That was always my dad’s philosophy. I made an ass of myself, so now my ass belongs to you! You promised to hold nothing back, so it’s only fair I return the favor.”

Whitney chanced a look back to find Tannie putting herself into position over the stool, supporting her weight on her elbows and knees, with her buttocks propped into the air. The wolf bit her lip. A moment ago, she’d been in complete control! Why did Tannie have to keep throwing her screwballs? With a wolfish growl, Whitney turned to face this ridiculous display of repentance.

Tannie heard the canine growl and felt a thrill travel up her spine, wondering if she’d overplayed her hand. Tannie experienced a mental image of a wolf sinking its teeth into a helpless lemur’s quivering flanks, before the touch of the birch rods snapped her out of such pleasant daydreams.

Whitney spoke slowly and clearly. "Tannie. If I do this, I'm doing this for real. Last chance. Do you want to stop?"

Tannie felt herself at the crossroads. The choice was hers, but she knew once she surrendered this choice, there would be no take-backsies. One word, and her bottom was safe, but then Tannie remembered Whitney's tears of worry. "No, spank me until I can't sit down for a week, and don't you *dare* go easy on me."

Whitney nodded once, her eyes focused. "Tannie, I never want to see you galavanting off on your own in the field again. We have protocols for a reason. If there's an emergency, do what you have to do, but if I so much as hear of you crossing the street without looking both ways, I'm hauling you right back to the woodshed. And if that doesn't work, I'll spank you day and night, night and day. Is that clear?"

Tannie instinctually answered like a private in boot camp. "Yes, ma'am!"

But, as usual, Tannie couldn't control her habit of joking in the face of her fear. She remembered something her dad had once told her when she was being particularly stubborn. "If I don't learn my lesson at one end, I'll learn it at the other end, ma'am!"

Tannie cringed when she heard the words escape from her mouth. Was she stupid? But to her surprise, Tannie heard laughter. She felt

her throat. No... it wasn't her? Looking back over her shoulder, Tannie saw Whitney, doubled up with fits of giggles.

Whitney wiped away tears of mirth, her scary drill sergeant act forgotten. "Oh my! That's a pun! I like that one! Yes! 'Learn it at the other end!' Your 'rear end,' that is! **Pffft!!**"

Tannie didn't think the pun was all that clever, but she couldn't help but giggle at Whitney's reaction. Over the sound of her own laughter, Tannie could barely make out Whitney gasping for breath and announcing, "Okay! *Phew!* No more delays!"

Just as Tannie let out a guffaw, she felt three light taps of the birch bundle, and then...

*WHACK!*

Thirty thick switches made their impact against her bottom. Tannie's mind scrambled. *"SHOOT! We're starting?"* she thought.

Jolting her head up, she looked back to make sure that this wasn't just a warning tap before more discussion, only to see Whitney, barely able to see through her watery eyes, winding up the next blow. *"Nope! We've started!"* thought Tannie, gripping the legs of the stool to brace for impact.

At the second impact of the birches, Tannie realized that the hardest of the warm-up spanks had been a mere prelude. The birch bundle easily covered most of the surface area of her buttocks, and the bark of the sticks felt like sandpaper against her already sensitive skin.

Tannie desperately wanted to cry out for a break, but furiously fought down the idea. She'd bucked and squirmed like a brat during her first spanking. She'd lay demurely like a guilty child during her second spanking. Tannie was determined to take her third and final spanking like a woman.

After the third lick of the birch bundle, Tannie consciously realized that it would be a matter of sheer willpower not to jump out of position and flee screeching to the corner covering her bottom. Holding back tears was out of the question, as they were already spilling down her cheeks freely.

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She remembered once, when Dad had finished spanking her for sassing Mom, and she hadn't shed a single tear. Rubbing her bottom, little Tannie looked up at Dad curiously. "Aren't you going to spank me 'til I cry, Daddy?"

"Are you sorry for what you said to your mother?"

"Yes, Daddy."

"Then there's no need, Tannie. It's not a bad thing to take your spanking without crying. 'Let the punishment fit the crime.' You've paid the penalty. I know you feel sorry. Now go and tell your mother so."

***

"It's not a sin to take your spanking well!" hissed Tannie to herself as the birches struck against her sit spots at a low angle, practically lifting her up off the stool.

After six blows, Tannie felt her head lowering toward the ground, gravity overcoming her exhausted muscles. She buried her face in her forearms with shuddering sobs, squeezing her fists to keep her hands from flying to cover her bottom.

After twelve strokes, Tannie felt her feet writhing and twisting across one another, desperately wanting to kick up against the oncoming birches, but Tannie held her feet in place as a thirteenth lash landed across her thighs. With one final, futile little kick, her feet plopped back to the ground, one black sock dangling off by a toe.

By the eighteenth blow, Tannie concentrated on holding onto the stool beneath her, like an anchor. She felt her legs press into it until the textured wood of the stool impressed into the skin of her thighs and palms.

Finally, at the touch of the twenty-fourth lash, her death grip on the stool relaxed, and Tannie felt her whole body sink. It was no longer a matter of will power. She was too exhausted to resist even if she wanted to. She just wanted to lay there and cry, but her eyes were so dry and puffy, she couldn't even do that. Once again, the sense of peace and trust overwhelmed her. Tannie knew that Whitney would suit the punishment to fit the crime. She accepted her fate.

Seeing that Tannie was at her limit, Whitney delivered the thirtieth spank. Of the original thirty birches, about twenty remained intact.

Whitney had originally planned to deliver forty lashes, but at the sight of Tannie's exhausted form, pity overwhelmed Whitney. Underneath the white-grey fur covering Tannie's bottom, red welts criss-crossed over every inch of the lemur's buttocks and thighs, glowing warmly through the fur.

Poor Tannie had learned her lesson. There was no need to prolong her torture. Whitney placed what she hoped was a reassuring hand on the small of Tannie's lower back, but felt Tannie flinch at her touch. "Tannie... there, there, silly lemur. Your punishment is over..."

As Tannie attempted to stumble back onto her own feet, Whitney deposited the remaining birches in the salt water jar, in case they

were ever needed again. “I’ll make breakfast, Tannie… I’m sorry I had to spank–”

Whitney was silenced as the Ring-tail pulled her into a bear hug. Whitney found her face pressed gently into her friend’s breast, covered with downy fur like a pillow. Tannie whimpered, “M’sowwy, Whitney… So, so sorry!”

Unsure what to do with her hands, and painfully aware of her friend’s nude form pressed against her, Whitney returned the embrace and accidentally brushed Tannie’s bottom. A shiver traveled up Tannie’s spine and Whitney pulled her hands away. “Sorry, Tannie!”

Whitney felt Tannie’s breath against her neck as she muttered, “No, s’okay, Whitney… Don’t stop, it’s… soothing actually.”

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Whitney served a breakfast of scrambled eggs and toast at the kitchen table, and sat down for breakfast with Tannie.

In Tannie’s case, she only sat down for breakfast figuratively, not literally.

A few flecks of scrambled egg flew from Tannie's mouth as she continued to wolf down a second helping. "Myoo new, Mwispah'? Yoo cood mee aw'pwofeshunnal spankuh'!"

Whitney took a dainty bite of her own breakfast. "Don't talk with your mouth full, Tannie. I can't understand a word you say."

"Thowwy!" Tannie gulped her mouthful and slammed her fist into her chest to force it down. Then she carefully dabbed at her mouth with a napkin, all ladylike. "You know, Whitney? You could be a professional spanker!"

"I doubt there's much market demand for that."

"But how'd you get so good at it?"

"I try to do everything as carefully and precisely as possible. I just spanked you the way I was punished as a child."

"So, wait? You've never done it before? You're a natural!"

Whitney looked at Tannie with her infamous blank expression, and spoke in a voice that could have been sarcasm if it wasn't utterly devoid of any vocal hint of it. "Thank you, Tannie... Your encouragement means a lot to me."

“You’re welcome!” beamed Tannie, utterly oblivious to the existence of sarcasm, and therefore utterly oblivious to the utter absence of sarcasm in her friend’s words.

Whisper smiled, ever so slightly. “Well, you took your spanking very bravely. I could say you’re a natural, too.”

Tannie waved a hand. “Oh, there’s no comparison. That’s from years of practice, not natural talent!”

Whitney bowed her head. “Well, maybe I need some practice too.”

“At spanking me? Not if I can help it! I’m going to be on my best behavior from now on, if only for my fanny’s sake!”

“No, Tannie. The other way round.”

Tannie knit her brow as she performed the necessary calculations. “Oh! You’re worried you can’t take a spanking? Well, there’s not much to it. Your job is basically to lie there and take your licks without moving. Though I guess that’s easier said than done?”

“You know, Tannie, if I’m allowed to spank you, it’s only fair that you’re allowed to spank me, if I deserve it,” said Whitney, in her “cold, hard logic” mode.

"Well, sure! But when are you ever gonna' need a spanking? What have you ever done wrong?"

"I lost my temper and slapped you across the cheek, remember?"

Amused, Tannie puffed her cheeks and blew a silent whistle. "After what you did to my bottom? That was nothing! That's what you're sorry for?"

"It's different, Tannie. We both agreed you deserved the spanking. It was fair. The slap wasn't fair to you. I still feel guilty."

Tannie remembered something her dad once told her. "Well, you're sorry. And you'll try your best to never do it again?"

"I won't *try* to never do it again. I will *never* do it again."

Tannie beamed. "Well, I forgive you! So there, problem solved!"

Whitney sighed. She really, *really* didn't want to say what she was thinking out loud. But Tannie wasn't getting the hint. "Tannie, I want you to spank me as punishment for slapping you. What's fair is fair."

Tannie nodded absent-mindedly, then did a double take, nearly choking on her eggs again. "**Kaff!** Me? Spank you? But... I've never... I don't want to hurt you, Whitney!"

Whitney nodded, pleased. “That’s exactly how I felt about spanking you! See? You’re already a natural, Tannie.”

Tannie scrutinized Whitney, wondering if this might be a joke. Then she nodded. “Okay, Whitney. I guess it’s my turn… Uh, can we wait until later? I don’t think I’m quite ready to sit down yet.”

“Sure, you can spank me before bedtime.”

Tannie spat out her orange juice. “Bedtime? Sure! I’ll just… come along and find you before we go to bed… before *you* go to bed—and *I* go to bed—in separate beds. Like my parents would want! This is their house, after all”

Whitney cracked a slight smile, enjoying Tannie’s accidental slapstick performance. “Of course, Tannie! I don’t want to disrespect your parents’ rules!”

Relieved, Tannie wiped the orange juice from her whiskers. “Yeah! I haven’t gotten a spanking from Mom or Dad in years, but who knows! Better not test my luck, right? … So, I guess that’s how your parents used to spank you when you were little?”

“No. That’s just how I want you to spank me, Tannie.”

Unsure what else to do, Tannie started to chug her orange juice and gave Whitney a thumbs up.

Whitney put a finger to her chin thoughtfully. “Though, now that you mention it, when I was a little wolf cub, Mom and Dad would always spank me on my bare bottom… no exceptions!”

Tannie spat out her orange juice again.

The End.

# *Red Rears for Roza and Ruby*

## Chapter I: OPERATION: Get Sonar to Marry Me!

Once upon a time, outside of the quaint village of Floral Forest, nestled amidst the vibrant blooms and verdant foliage, there was... a bush. Apart from the fact that a bluebird named Flicky liked to hunt for worms there, there was nothing particularly remarkable about this bush. But as Flicky made his mid-morning meal, he heard a chirping sound, like bird-song, though not like any he'd ever heard. The leaves of this bush rustled, and Flicky flew away, tweeting furiously.

Out from the bush popped the pink-haired head of a young, love-struck, star-crossed Needle-mouse: Annie Roza. She held up a device like an analog walkie-talkie with a miniature television screen, the source of the beeping that had so offended poor Flicky.

"Come on, Taylor, don't let me down!" growled Annie under her breath as she slapped the screen with the gloved palm of her hand. The device was a Cosmic Gemstone Locator, Taylor's latest invention. It had led Annie to the general area of Floral Forest, but the blip that indicated a Cosmic Gemstone was close by had been moving in circles all morning.

"Once I find that Cosmic Gemstone, and get it set in an engagement ring, then break into Sonar's house, hide the ring under his pillow, and play subliminal messages over the radio for a few weeks telling Sonar to marry Annie Roza, he's sure to find it, take it as a sign from heaven, and surprise me with a magical, romantic proposal of marriage!"

Annie grinned slyly. Her plan was fool proof! Too bad Taylor's gadget wasn't more precise, but he was only a kid after all.

As she played with the dial impatiently, the blip appeared on her screen again, and Annie nearly fumbled the locator in her excitement. It was only thirty feet away? But then more dots appeared on the screen. Four of them? That couldn't be right!

Annie huffed, sending one of her pink strands of "hair" fluttering (one of her quills). "I am *so* going to kick Taylor's tails when I get home!"

Then she heard footsteps approaching. Annie hid deeper in the bush at the sight of a robot. Was it one of Walrusman's Robo-Baddies? Annie exhaled with relief as she examined the lone robot more carefully, and recognized him. "No! It's just Berylin. Thank goodness!"

Although Berylin had technically been created by the bad doctor, Berylin had defected to Team Sonar after befriending Crème the

Hare. Suddenly a lightbulb appeared over Annie Roza's head. "I should say hi. Maybe Berylin knows something about the Cosmic–"

Just as Annie jumped out of the bush to introduce herself, several things happened at once. The wind rustled the branches of the trees above them, and as Berylin caught sight of Annie, he twitched reflexively into a battle stance. Annie tried to shout, "Woah!" as she produced her weapon, a Whacka-Mo Hammer, to defend herself. Then a shadowy figure leapt from the tree branches, dropping straight towards Berylin, who spun his attention upward.

Berylin's glass eyes flashed red. "Ambush sighted! Defense protocol engaged!"

His metallic arm shot upward to block, just in time to intercept a mean axe kick from the mysterious assailant. As Berylin struck the assassin's chest, she squeaked and hopped backward into the light, covering her ample breasts with a pout. The assassin pulled back her ninja mask, revealing her large, white ears and sharp teeth with a snarl. "Humph! Well I never! I see Walrusman hasn't programmed you to behave like a gentleman!"

Annie recognized the voice at once. It was none other than the planet's most infamous international jewel thief, treasure hunter, government spy, double agent, triple agent, sometimes-bad-guy, sometimes-good-guy, always-fatal, and ever-feminine *femme fatale:* Ruby the Rousette!

“Ruby? What are you…”

Before Annie could finish, Berylin leapt at her with a spinning reverse hook kick. “Attackers on two sides! Recommended tactics: 1. Use aggressive offense to create distance! 2. Retreat to Floral Forest Village! 3. Raise the alarm!”

Annie whipped up the handle of her hammer to deflect the kick, but not wanting to hurt a friend of a friend, she checked her counter-blow.

Before Annie could open her mouth to explain herself, Ruby interrupted with a hooting, high-pitched cackle. “Announcing your attacks? How darling! You remind me of Omega.”

As Ruby attempted a running jump kick, Berylin dodged out of the way of her deadly stiletto high-heels, leaving a shocked Annie directly in Ruby’s path. With a squeal, Annie ducked, and the knife-like heel sunk into the tree trunk above her head. “Ruby? You almost took my head off!”

Struggling to pull her heel free, Ruby immediately hid her fear behind her bravado. “Well, well, well, Annie Roza? You’re out of your league, kid. But don’t worry, I’m a government agent. I’m trained to take down Walrusman’s robots!”

Annie tried to scramble out from under Ruby's leg, still pinned in place above her. "I'm not a kid! And Berylin's not one of–"

The two unlady-like ladies froze as they heard a humming roar behind them. Both turned to look, and found Berylin's arms pointed at them like cannons, steam rising, before crackling orange energy burst from them.

Annie was on her hands and knees. Ruby was still standing on one leg.

Out of respect for his friend Crème the Hare, Berylin thankfully refused to use lethal force.

Nevertheless, as his programming dictated, Berylin aimed for the center of mass. The two beams of energy landed precisely on Annie and Ruby's rear ends, blasting aside Annie's hammer and snapping Ruby's knife-like high heel. They landed face-first in the soft dirt, their two tails steaming from the residual heat.

Berylin casually kept his arm cannons trained on the two strangers as they flew through the air and landed, ready to blast them again. "Targets temporarily stunned. Initiating 'friend or foe' protocol. Unidentified assailants, please identify yourselves as either friend or foe."

Ruby snarled as she lifted her face from the dirt, spitting out a pebble, her sensitive ears still ringing from the blast. “Get out of here, Annie! I’ll handle Walrusman’s lackey!”

To her credit, even with a missing high-heel, Ruby managed to stumble between Annie and the robot’s line of fire before she froze at the sight of Berylin aiming another blast at her chest. His eyes flickering red, his voice suddenly became less robotic in his anger. “I am not Walrusman’s lackey anymore! Answer required. Friend? Or foe?”

Still wincing, Annie snapped her hands up in a gesture of surrender. “We’re friends! I mean, I’m friends with Crème the Hare!”

Instantly, Berylin’s eyes flashed from blazing red to a more cautious yellow. “Friends of Crème?”

Annie nodded furiously, trying to catch Ruby’s eye.

In truth, Ruby didn’t know Crème that well, but as she looked back and forth, she caught the hint. “Yes! Good friends! Both of us!”

Berylin cocked his head as his central processing unit started to buzz. “Accessing memory. Targets identified. Calculating probability of veracity…”

“Who are you?” chirped a little voice from behind Annie and Ruby.

Annie and Ruby stiffened, and turned to look. It was Crème the Hare, holding a picnic basket.

Crème closed her eyes, smiling as she recognized Annie. "Oh! Miss Annie! What are you–"

Berylin's eyes flashed red again. "Miss Crème! Please remove yourself from the vicinity!"

Annie and Ruby started babbling at the same time. "We're-friends-we're-friends-we're-friends!"

Crème stomped her foot. "Mr. Berylin! You stop that, right this instant! This is my friend, Annie Roza!"

"Acknowledged. And what of the assassin?"

Crème cocked her head at the sight of the bat in the strange, skin-tight outfit. Her pet, Saucer the Cosmo, poked his blue head curiously out of the picnic basket to investigate. Crème and Saucer shared a look, both wondering why the grown bat-woman was still wearing her pajamas. "I'm sorry, have we met, Ma'am?" asked Crème.

Painfully aware that Berylin's two cannons were now aimed directly at her chest (one for each of her breasts), Ruby struggled to find a

truthful answer that also wouldn't anger the guardian robot. "Well! I think we met briefly after that whole business with Metal Sonar, but... I'd love to be friends!"

Crème giggled. "Oh! I remember now! Silly me! You're Mr. Duster's friend! He asked me all sorts of questions about you! I simply must have you over to Mother's house for tea!"

Finally, as Berylin's eyes gently shifted from yellow to a soothing green color, his stiff robotic words became more warm and human. "Calculations complete. Initiating apology. I am so sorry, Miss Annie and Miss Ruby. My inductive reasoning regarding your intentions was faulty. I incorrectly concluded that you were after the Cosmic Gemstone."

"Cosmic Gemstone?" snapped Annie and Ruby at the same instant.

Berylin nodded. "Affirmative. Analyzing situation... Ha. Ha. Ha. As Miss Crème would say, 'How silly of me!'"

The robot opened a hatch on his chest, producing a hefty gem, clear as a diamond. As his gentle personality overrode the more logical aspects of his programming, Berylin closed his eyes to indicate an amused expression. "It would appear this present circumstance perfectly fits the definition of irony!"

His eyes went wide as Annie and Ruby both dove for the gem, crashing into his chest and into each other.

As the coveted emerald flew into the air, Crème's plaintive cry of, "No!" was lost over the furious sound of the three-man brawl.

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Vanille the Hare sipped her rooibos tea daintily, wondering what was keeping Crème. It was a shame to miss tea time on a perfect spring day like today. What could be more calming than a rich, red rooibos, sweetened with honey, cream, and vanilla?

Vanille basked in the sight of a flock of birds taking flight above the nearby forest. Then, with a crack like thunder, an intense blast of energy burst from the forest into the sky. An old oak tree trembled, then fell over, raising a pillar of dust, leaves, and ash.

Vanille ducked as a chunk of wood the size of a dagger came spiraling towards her from the forest. The missile shattered her perfect cup of tea, before it sank, quivering, into the cottage wall behind her.

Rolling up her sleeves, Vanille ran to ring the alarm bell for the volunteer fire department, ignoring the sound of a third explosion echoing from the forest.

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"Oh no! Mr. Berylin, please don't fight! Violence is not the answer!" wailed Crème, as the robot's arm cannon shot missed Ruby the Roussette, felling another tree.

"Chi chi!" chimed in Saucer.

Berylin kicked the Cosmic Gemstone from Ruby's clutches, then held up a hand. "Fear not, Miss Crème. Though your friends' behavior is unacceptable, I will only utilize Combat Practice Mode to neutralize them."

But before he could snatch the gem up, Annie Roza launched it high into the air like a polo ball, using her Whacka-Mo Hammer. "Look, I don't want to hurt you, Berylin, but I need that Cosmic Gemstone! ... Yipe!"

Annie deftly blocked a series of karate chops as Berylin spun his arms like helicopter blades. "Such concerns may be disregarded, Miss Annie. You cannot hurt me. I am not programmed to feel pain."

Kicking against a tree, Ruby managed to get enough height to glide after the gem, using her leathery wings to hover. She snatched it before either Annie or Berylin could reach it. "Sorry, but this beauty is already spoken for."

Berylin launched into the air with surprising force, on a direct collision course to intercept Ruby. And he would have had her, if Annie's Whacka-Mo Hammer hadn't knocked him out of the air, sending him crashing into a patch of tall grass.

Annie stammered as she waved to the robot's prone form, before running past him awkwardly, hot on the bat's trail. "Sorry! I'm Sorry! So sorry!"

Crème cradled Berylin's spherical head, relieved to see that the robot was only stunned, his eyes displaying spinning logos as he rebooted. "Annie Roza! Shame on you! That's no way to treat Mr. Berylin!"

Hopping nimbly from rocks and tree branches to reach her quarry, Annie turned and looked over her shoulder stupidly in mid air, "I didn't wanna hurt him! It was a... reeeeeflex!"

Annie's last word trailed off into a wail as the handle of the Whacka-Mo Hammer lodged into Ruby's right boot. Ruby careened as she felt something heavy pull her off balance. Ruby barely missed a maple tree, and looked down to find Annie dangling from her heels. "Leggo, bimbo! I can't carry your weight!"

"Say what about my weight? Are you calling me fat?" roared Annie.

Ruby twisted in midair to avoid a series of birch trees, and gambled on trying to make Annie lose her temper long enough to shake free from her grip. “Oh, don’t worry, lovebird, you’re skinny as a rail! Most men *do* prefer a gal with curves, but who knows? Maybe Sonar’s an exception!”

Furious, Annie fixed her grip around Ruby’s ankles and snapped the Whacka-Mo Hammer forward, slapping the Cosmic Gemstone free from Ruby’s grip.

By now, Ruby’s flight had angled so sharply, they were heading straight back towards Crème and Berylin. Mad with greed, Ruby dove downward for the gem blindly, her stomach smacking against a tree branch, knocking the wind out of her. The force of the sudden stop carried Annie forward along an arc that sent her spiraling forward and upside-down.

Berylin blinked his eyes, and the spinning wheels vanished as his system reset. Instantly, he thrust upward and towards the spiraling gem in mid-air, only for Annie to snatch it from his fingers as she flew through the air.

Wailing, Annie was momentarily oblivious of the prize she held, until a sparkle caught her eye. For a blessed moment, she held the gem and imagined Sonar kneeling to place a 3,000 karat engagement ring on her finger.

Then she smacked flat into a tree trunk and the emerald went flying behind her.

By this point, Ruby had caught her breath, and dove down to skim along the grass and intercept the gem before it landed. “Not! One! Scratch! On! My! Jewel!”

Unable to feel pain, Berylin thrust himself after the gem, letting Ruby smack against him, hoping to knock her out of the sky and bring the fight to a quick resolution without hurting Crème’s friends further.

Unfortunately, his computations underestimated Ruby’s tenacity to possess the precious jewel. With a well-practiced flying judo maneuver, she caught the gem and rolled over the robot, sending him flat on his back with enough force to leave an impression in the soft ground.

Mechanically, Berylin shot a blast through his arm cannon that sent the indestructible emerald flying into the air once again, clearing the canopy above and heading towards the nearby village.

With a hiss, Berylin grasped his arm in an all-too-human gesture, as though he could feel pain after all. “No! Must… resist urge to terminate Crème’s friends! Override Command: Big Brother!”

With a dense *"Thwoom!"* Berylin's arm cannons disconnected and flew away from his body, leaving him (figuratively and literally) disarmed. With a mechanical chirp that sounded oddly like a human groan of exhaustion, Berylin collapsed backwards.

Ruby lifted a boot that could have impaled even the robot's steel armor. But then she hesitated.

Whether it was pity at the sight of the robot's heroic struggle, or a refusal to let anything distract her from the gem, only Ruby knew.

Leaving her downed opponent, she leapt lightly up and away from the robot. The jewel seemed to hang in midair, before slowly descending towards the central square in Floral Forest village.

Ignoring the stunned bystanders, Ruby swooped past them, grinning wickedly, the sparkle of the gem reflecting in her eyes and on her pointed bat teeth.

All the jewels in the world belonged to her!

Then, something slammed into the ground directly in front of her, with a resounding, *"PIKO!"*

Ruby's face smacked directly against Annie's Whacka-Mo Hammer. For such a heavy weapon, it was surprisingly soft, the energy of the hammer producing a crackle of heart-shaped energy that could send

Annie's opponents flying without serious injury. Annie Roza *did* fight with the power of love, after all!

Using the handle of the hammer like a pole vault, Annie thrust into the air, to catch the gem that would crown her wedding ring. She had won! This was an omen! She and Sonar would get married, and have seven children!

With a clink, the gem froze in mid-air, and Annie's leap carried her forward and into a face-plant. Crème the Hare was fluttering above her holding the Chis emerald, thanks to the power granted by her long ears to defy the laws of gravity. "Annie Roza! Miss Ruby! That's enough! This Cosmic Gemstone doesn't belong to you!"

Picking herself up, Annie suddenly felt stupid. Everything had been happening so fast, she'd forgotten how foolish she must look to Crème, who she regarded as both a friend and unofficial little sister.

Before Annie could apologize, Ruby interrupted. "That's right! It doesn't belong to you! It belongs to me!"

Annie and Crème didn't recognize the sound of the voice until they turned to look. Ruby was so furious, she had lost all the femme fatale sultriness that usually marked her attitude.

Her chest heaving for air, the immodest bat pulled something from her low-cut top so furiously, her breasts jiggled. Unaware of the

mothers rushing to cover the eyes of their children, Ruby smugly flipped open the wallet to display a badge. "I'm an official agent of the Global League of Operations, and I'm here to collect the Cosmic Gemstone!"

Annie gripped her Whacka-Mo Hammer so tightly, the fabric of her gloves creaked. "Those clowns have no control over the Cosmic Gemstones! Besides, I need it for Sonar!"

Ruby cocked an eyebrow. "Oh? And I suppose Sonar sent you to collect them all for some important mission? We all know how much he *hates* having to go on adventures and save the world himself!"

Annie choked. "Well... not exactly! But it *is* really important, and it *is* for Sonar!"

By this point, Crème, Saucer, and the local children and families had all gathered around to watch this dramatic turn of events. Nothing this exciting ever happened in cozy, folksy, Floral Forest Village. Crème settled down on the ground next to Berylin. Although the robot seemed to have recovered from his ordeal, the dings and scratches in his metal body gave the impression that he was a bit rattled.

With a smirk, Ruby deftly tucked the wallet back into place between her cleavage, before producing a surprisingly large briefcase which

had also been perfectly concealed in the same hiding place. With a flick, the briefcase opened to reveal three Chis emeralds. Her temper cooling, Ruby regained her smooth, teasing tone of voice. "Well, in that case, I'll bring it straight to Sonar for you!"

Annie's eyes widened at the sight of the gems, imagining which color would look best on her ring finger. "That's not fair! Why do you get three? I only need one!"

Crème looked at Annie with hurt in her eyes, but also with a hint of curiosity. "But, Annie, I thought you were bringing all the emeralds to Mr. Sonar? Why would you only need one?"

The crowd gasped, and Annie suddenly became aware that she and Ruby had an audience. Ruby gestured to the onlookers as if to say, "See?"

Aware just how stupid "Operation Get Sonar To Marry Me" would sound if she was questioned any further, Annie felt her cheeks flush. "Hold on! If you're collecting the Cosmic Gemstones for G.L.O., why are you willing to take them to Sonar? The government hates how Sonar shows them up all the time!"

Ruby's eyes went wide. "I was just collecting them... for research!"

Her brow knitting, Crème blurted out, "What kind of research?"

Then Crème covered her mouth, horrified by her own rudeness, before raising her hand politely. "Oops! I'm sorry! Excuse me, Miss Ruby, what kind of research?"

A sweat bead trickled down Ruby's forehead, landing squarely atop her quivering intermammary cleft. "That's... classified! Need-to-know basis only! Of course, I have no problem sharing my gems with Sonar if he needs them to save the earth."

Annie fixed Ruby with what she hoped was her fiercest girlboss face. "What do you mean, *my* gems?"

The crowd gasped and looked to Ruby expectantly. A local food-truck vendor called out, "Popcorn! Get your popcorn here!"

Clearing her throat, Ruby stuffed the briefcase back into place between her breasts. With a single jiggle, it vanished completely! "That was a figure of speech! Look, little girl! It's pretty obvious you're after 'just one' Cosmic Gemstone for some personal reason. Go on, do tell!"

Annie refused to take the bait. "Little girl? You're barely any older than me!"

"Ooo! Now it's getting personal!" whispered an elderly onlooker.

A couple of pre-teen boys started quietly chanting, “Cat! Fight! Cat! Fight!” their eyes filled with hope.

Ruby examined her nails. “I’m nineteen years old, so I’m the only legal adult here!”

A little red-tailed squirrel in a hoop skirt pointed at Ruby and whispered to her mother quizzically. “Mom? Is it okay for me to dress like her when I turn nineteen?”

“Not unless you want a spanking when you turn nineteen, dear,” answered her mother, neutrally.

The young squirrel nodded. “Oh! Okay. In that case I don’t wanna.”

Ignoring the crowd, Annie scrambled to find a retort, hoping to get Ruby to slip up again. “Well, I’m seventeen years old! See? You’re barely older than me!”

Ruby sighed dramatically. “Didn’t you use a magic ring to wish to be a teenager when you were eight-years-old or something? C’mon, girl to girl, what’s your real age? Twelve years old?”

Annie blushed. “That’s not how it happened! I mean… yeah, sorta, but we found a way to undo that!”

Ruby rested her chin on the back of her hand coyly. “Oh! So you admit you used a magic ring to turn yourself into a teenager because you were obsessed with getting Sonar to notice you? And I’m supposed to trust you with a Cosmic Gemstone?”

“Wait, did that really happen, Unc?” asked a young chipmunk wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with the words “Sonar Fan Club.”

“Sigh. It’s a long story, sonny,” answered his uncle, putting away his *Archie* comic book.

Her temper rising, Annie ignored the growing whispers of the crowd. “Oh! That does it!” She slammed the Whacka-Mo Hammer into the ground with enough force to send rattling tremors through the ground that caught everyone off guard.

Everyone except Ruby.

The bat skipped lightly into the air and floated back down to avoid the earth-trembling blow. “If you’re that set on embarrassing yourself in public, I suppose I can give you the spanking you have coming, little missy!”

Annie twirled the Whacka-Mo Hammer lightly in her hands. “Well, I’m the only one who brought a paddle!”

As Annie and Ruby's eyes locked, it was as if a bolt of lightning snapped between them.

The two pre-teen boys' chants of "Cat! Fight! Cat! Fight!" were now reaching a crescendo.

Crème surreptitiously hid the Cosmic Gemstone in her picnic basket, before politely raising her hand again. "Excuse me, Annie? Miss Ruby? Please don't fight again! We can solve our problems with words, not fists!"

Alas, too late!

Annie and Ruby didn't intend to use their fists.

Annie slammed her Whacka-Mo Hammer into the ground again, using the impact to launch herself forward for a mid-air charge.

Ruby the Roussette performed an elegant pirouette that transformed into a diving kick with her unbroken stiletto heel. Time seemed to slow to a standstill as the two mortal foes dove towards each other like two samurai.

Just before Ruby's heel impacted against the surface of the Whacka-Mo Hammer, the entire crowd shielded their eyes and turned away, readying themselves for a blinding light, followed by a deafening explosion! In an instant, it would all be over!

But neither light nor explosion came.

"Annie Roza! Ruby the Roussette! That is *enough!"* Vanille the Hare, Crème's mother, intercepted them both, pinching Annie's hammer in one hand, Ruby's unbroken high heel in her other. Annie and Ruby froze in mid-air, until they became aware of the existence of gravity, and finally snapped to attention back on the ground.

Vanille stood with her hands on her hips, a frown etched upon her face. "Just look at the mess you've made," she scolded in a no-nonsense tone, gesturing to the disarray around them.

As the de-facto matriarch of Floral Forest Village, Vanille had an imposing presence, over a head taller than both girls. "You've set a terrible example for the little ones."

At the thought of Crème witnessing this, Annie hung her head like a scolded child, but Ruby folded her arms across her chest, before starting to flutter her wings to lift off. "Wow! That's a lot of damage! Well, Annie, since your hammer did all this, I suppose I'll just leave you to–"

"Oh, no you don't, you brazen little strumpet! You're both coming with me!" snapped Vanille, pinning Ruby firmly by the ear before she could escape.

Annie opened her mouth to offer explanations, apologies, excuses, but the words died on her lips as she felt Vanille pinch her ear as well. Already, Annie recognized that dangerous quality in Vanille's voice, the kind that would brook no argument. Annie had heard it before.

Ruby dropped straight back to earth, grasping at Vanille's wrist in a desperate attempt to relieve the pressure on her ear. "Ow! Hey, watch it, lady! I'm a federal agent!"

Vanille narrowed her eyes as she examined Ruby's outfit. "Oh? And I suppose the government is using my tax dollars to hire strippers to vandalize the town square now? So, what else is new!"

"Yowch! I'm not a stripper! This is stealth gear! And it was Little Miss Bubble Gum here who put craters in your sidewalk, not me!"

Annie felt Vanille release the grasp on her ear and point toward Berylin, who was covered in dings from the recent scuffle. "Did you do that to poor Berylin?"

Ruby's eyes darted to Berylin nervously, before she looked back to Vanille to protest. "Huh? Oh, c'mon! I thought he was a Robo-Baddie! Yikes!" Ruby's shoulders hunched as she felt Vanille tighten the delicate pinch.

Vanille lifted Ruby's ear up, oh so slightly, so that their eyes met, before gently taking hold of Annie's ear again and frog-marching them both toward her cottage. "Don't you, 'Oh, c'mon!' me, Little Miss My Tax Dollars at Work. It was a simple question. You can answer with a simple 'Yes, Ma'am!' or 'No, Ma'am!'"

Ruby hooted as she hobbled forward on tip-toe, still shaky thanks to her missing high heel. "Ouchie! Okay, okay! Yes! ... Yes, ma'am! But–Yeee!"

Vanille quickened the pace of the march. "I don't want to hear any 'buts'! Now, you march, Little Miss I'm From the Government And I'm Here to Help!"

Berylin raised his hand politely. "Excuse me, Mrs. Vanille, but my damage is only superficial, and did indeed result from a mutual misunderstanding. I share the blame."

Instantly, Vanille's stern gaze melted to a warm smile as she paused the death march. "Thank you, Berylin. I'll take that into consideration."

Ruby tried to nod, but the pinch on her ear prevented her from lowering her head so much as an inch. "There! See? All a simple misunderstanding! But it was Annie who–"

At the mention of the word 'but,' Ruby's protests were silenced by a single gentle twist to the ear that sent the bat standing on one foot and tapping the toe of her broken-heeled boot. Vanille stood regally, enjoying the spectacle, before answering. "Oh, don't worry, Miss *Rudey*. I'll have words with Annie soon enough."

Annie winced as Vanille fixed her with a stern look, but not because of any pain in her ear.

The hot temper in Vanille's voice faded to cold disappointment. "Miss Roza, I expected better of you."

Annie shivered under Vanille's icy stare, before it was replaced by a fresh fire in the mother's eyes. Annie followed Vanille's gaze ahead to see where she was leading them. Looming ahead of them was Vanille and Crème's cozy cottage, and next to it, a quaint wooden shed.

Annie and Crème had been friends for years, sharing birthdays and sleepovers. Everyone knew Crème as the most polite, delightful little girl they had ever met. Annie agreed with the sentiment, but she was one of the few people outside the Hare family who knew the reason.

Of course, Crème the Hare was so polite because Vanille the Hare was both a loving mother and a firm disciplinarian.

On more than one occasion, Annie Roza had misbehaved while Vanille was responsible for her, on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Roza.

And on more than one occasion, Vanille had escorted Annie to that same woodshed, with the approval of Mr. and Mrs. Roza.

At the sight of the woodshed, Crème piped up, "Excuse me, Mom? Are you going to spank them?"

"Well, Crème, dear, that depends on what they did, and whether they tell me the truth," Vanille replied, her voice firm. "First, I'm going to get to the bottom of things. And if they need a spanking... well, I'll get to the bottom of things!"

Annie quailed. She'd known this was coming, but hearing it said out loud was like a death sentence. Just hearing the word "spanking" all by itself was enough to put Annie into a state of complete surrender. Her face flushed with embarrassment, Annie closed her eyes, already feeling tears. "I'm so sorry, Mrs. Vanille! You don't have to spank us! I promise not to fight Ruby any more!"

At the mention of spanking, Ruby's eyes widened with disbelief, and the struggle to free her ear became more desperate, but no less futile. "Hold on! Is this a joke? I'm too old for a spanking!"

"Too old, Miss Ruby the Roussette? Well, as long as you insist on acting like Miss Ruby the *Brat*, my opinion is that you'll never be too old for a good spanking!"

Ruby stammered. “But... I have rights! I’m innocent until proven guilty! I work for the President, dammit!”

Crème, Saucer, and Annie all winced at the sound of the curse word, remembering all the times Vanille had washed their mouths out with soap for swearing.

For the moment, Vanille chose to ignore Ruby’s potty mouth. “Indeed you do have rights! So, once we talk to the police, I’d advise you to ask for a lawyer and exercise your right to remain silent!”

Ruby rolled her eyes and blew a raspberry. (*“Whoa! Two more spanking offenses!”* thought Crème and Saucer and Annie simultaneously.) “What, you gonna have the local sheriff toss me in the clink? C’mon! I work for the Pres–”

“Yes, dear. I know you work for the President,” Vanille interrupted. “We’ll come to that matter soon.”

Crème marveled at her mother’s calm self-control, as if Ruby was a toddler fussing over not wanting to eat her vegetables.

Vanille continued her explanation. “But in the first place, Floral Forest Village has no jail, because usually there’s no need for one here. On the exceedingly rare occasion some trouble-maker comes to town, Sheriff Tom has to escort them all the way to Central City for booking. Given that it’s impractical to have every misbehaving child

arrested and locked up, I tend to favor less extreme methods, like timeouts, or spankings. You'll have to forgive me, Miss Ruby! Given that you were rough-housing with Miss Roza, I assumed I was dealing with two naughty little girls who needed a lesson in manners."

Vanille turned her attention from Ruby to Annie. "Thankfully, no one was hurt in the explosions you caused, though there was some property damage. You see, Annie's parents and I are kindred spirits on matters of child rearing. In fact, I think of Annie as the second daughter I never had!"

Annie's heart sank at the thought of how her actions could have endangered others, then fluttered at being called Vanille's second daughter. It was a different kind of love than she felt in the presence of her one true love, Sonar the Needle-mouse, but no less profound.

Vanille released her grasp on Ruby's ear, but not Annie's, allowing Ruby a moment to rub her ear and consider her predicament. "Of course, Miss Ruby, if you are too old for a spanking, then I suppose we'll have to bother Sheriff Tom. I'm sure if you call up The President, he'll vouch for you."

Ruby stiffened. She was free. She could fly away right now. But no one at G.L.O. had actually authorized her to collect the Cosmic Gemstones. Flashing her badge was usually enough to satisfy rural sheriffs and beat cops, but a police report would mean a lot of

annoying paperwork, and possibly some uncomfortable questions from HQ. Agent Topaz was going to bust Ruby's chops for this. Her best bet was to pour the charm on Sheriff Tom.

Ruby put her trust in her tried and true sassiness. "So be it! Call up Sheriff Tom. What kind of doughnuts does he like? The agency can send him a box to apologize for you wasting his time with–"

With a flourish, Vanille produced a phone from her pocket. "Oh! No need for that! We can just call up the President!"

Ruby pursed her lips, still amused, but also hiding her nerves. "I can't bother the President with something so trivial! I'll just–"

Vanille pressed a button on her speed dial. "Hello? Mr. President? This is Vanille the Hare. Thank you for taking my call! ... Oh! You're too kind! Say, You know the Cosmic Gemstone you asked me to protect?"

Smiling softly, Vanilla eyed Rouge. "Well, some lady's here causing a ruckus about it. She says she's an agent of G.L.O., flashing a badge, claims she works for you? Do you know a Miss Ruby the Roussette? ... Yes! Dressed like that, I'm afraid. I certainly hope that's not the standard uniform for all your female agents! ... Of course, I'll put you on speaker."

With a blip, the President's bright pink face appeared on Vanille's phone, his toupee flapping dangerously. "Agent Ruby? What are you doing there? Your last report said you were scouting Dr. Walrusman's—"

Vanille didn't take her eyes off of Ruby as she interrupted. "Careful, Mr. President! That's classified!"

"Oh! Of course, Mrs. Vanille! Thank you for reminding me, ma'am! Ahem! Agent Ruby! You better not be causing trouble for Mrs. Vanille!"

Annie pressed her lips together, desperately holding back a fit of giggles. The look on Ruby's face was priceless!

Although Crème had released her, Ruby felt as if she was locked in a cell already. "But... I finished my mission and filed my report. I was just making a quick detour to locate the Cosmic–"

"For the last time! We're not interested in collecting the Cosmic Gemstones any more! If you want to poke around for the missing ones on your own time, so be it, but gathering them all is just asking for trouble from Dr. Walrusman! And for Pete's sake, don't bother Mrs. Vanille about your little jewelry collection mania! I'll have you busted down to checking parking meters if you've–"

Vanille smiled wanly. “Careful, Mr. President. Remember your blood pressure.”

“Oh! Thank you, Mrs. Vanille! I’m so sorry! Please allow me to send someone to set Ruby straight for you. I’ll have a full investigation! Heads will roll!”

“Thank you, Mr. President, but it’s really no trouble at all. I’m sure Ruby and I will be able to come to an understanding. In fact, if you don’t mind, I might ask her to do a little community service while she’s here. Help get things cleaned up around town.”

“Hmm? Well, if it’s really no trouble… by all means! Agent Ruby is all yours, Mrs. Vanille. Though, do tell me if she makes any more fuss about your Cosmic Gemstone!”

Vanille nodded cheerfully, before turning the screen to face herself again. “I’m sure she won’t, Mr. President. Say, before I forget, how is the progress coming on your proposal to reduce Federal deficit spending this year?”

Now it was the President’s turn to look nervous. “Oh! I’m working tirelessly on it! I promise you we’re going to get the national debt under control!”

Vanille’s eyes were like cold steel. “That’s good to hear, Mr. President. You know how important this issue is for the sake of the

next generation. Please continue to give the matter your full attention."

The President wiped the sweat from his brow. "Yes, Ma'am!"

With a perfectly polite goodbye, Vanille hung up on the President. "Well, Miss Ruby, what'll it be? You can come along with me and Annie to discuss your behavior, or would you prefer to have Sheriff Tom read you your Miranda rights?"

Ruby felt sweat trickle down her bare shoulders. "Wuh... what's community service?"

"It means you'll stay under my roof for a few nights, a week at most, along with Annie, until you girls have made amends for the trouble you caused. And then, we'll forgive and forget."

"Instead of the spanking—I mean—instead of the police? How do I know you won't just have me arrested anyway after you're done toying with me?"

Feeling her blood boil, Annie couldn't contain her composure a moment longer. "Mrs. Vanille would never do that! She's always fair!"

Annie shuddered as Vanille turned her gaze on her, but Vanille's eyes were kindly. "Thank you, Annie, but please don't interrupt."

Annie swallowed as she felt Vanille's fingers press into her ear. "Yes, ma'am!"

Vanille returned her attention to the trembling figure of Ruby the Roussette. "I'll answer your second question first, Ruby. Yes, instead of the police. After community service, the matter is settled. You have my word as a mother. It's how I'd handle my own daughter, or Annie, or any youngster who is mature enough to learn from their mistakes...

"But community service is most certainly *not* instead of a spanking. Frankly, you've got at least one good spanking coming to you today already. Of course, you can most certainly expect another spanking any time, and every time, you misbehave while staying under my roof, and additional punishment if I simply deem it necessary to help the lesson sink in properly...

"After a week, at most, I'll consider your debt to society paid in full, and you're free to go. We'll consider the matter settled. If I can get you straightened out in less than a week, and the damage you've caused is repaired quickly, you'll of course be free to go early. Think of it as time off for good behavior. But it's no good treating you like I'd treat my own daughter unless you agree to accept discipline."

Ruby trembled, barely catching herself from repeating the forbidden word "but." "B-Buh... I'm the world's greatest... I mean, I

haven't been spanked since I was... since I was a little..." Ruby's eyes were downcast. "Okay..."

"Okay, what? Speak clearly."

"I mean, yes! I accept your terms, Vanille!"

"You may address me as either Mrs. Vanille, or ma'am. Please respond with a simple 'Yes, ma'am,' or 'No, ma'am' when I ask a simple yes or no question. Do you understand, Miss Ruby?"

Ruby nodded, all traces of sass gone from her demeanor. "Yes, Mrs. Vanille!"

Slowly, submissively, Ruby allowed Vanille to take hold of her ear again. Ruby realized that she was now a prisoner, yet strangely, she also felt a deep sense of trust and liberation. Ruby knew that whatever punishment she was about to face, she herself had just made the choice to face it.

Satisfied, Vanille looked to Annie, who stiffened. Now it was the pink Needle-mouse's turn for Vanille's interrogation. "Annie, earlier you said that you wouldn't fight Ruby anymore and I didn't have to spank you. I'm glad you want to do better, but I'm afraid I still have to spank you. You know your parents have given me permission to do so for far less than what you did today. Do you agree?"

Annie sniffled. “Yes, ma’am.”

Behind them, Crème and Saucer wiped their eyes. Finally, Crème wept openly. “I’m sorry you’ve got to get spanked, Annie!”

“What? You’re not sorry about me getting spanked?” scoffed Ruby, before she bit her tongue.

Vanille tactfully ignored Ruby’s remark, knowing she’d have to pick her battles carefully with the willful wench. “They’ll be fine, Crème. You and Saucer go home and set the table for lunch. Then put fresh sheets on the twin beds in your room for Miss Roza and Miss Ruby. Saucer and Choco can sleep in the old crib while our guests are with us.”

Crème answered with her customary politeness, and flew to obey.

Vanille escorted her two charges to the door of her sizable woodshed. Remembering Ruby’s earlier smart-aleck remark, Vanille decided to address the bratty bat. “Miss Ruby, please open the door for me.”

Ruby pouted, deliberately hesitating for three whole seconds before reaching for the handle. “Yes, ma’am.”

[End of Chapter I]

# Chapter II: A Contest of Wills

Ruby's espionage training had taught her to pay attention to her surroundings and draw conclusions. She observed quite a few interesting details inside Mrs. Vanille's woodshed.

In the first place, it was large, almost the size of a ranch home all by itself, and had clearly been used for extensive wood work at one point. Above an antique workbench in the corner hung a framed picture of a family of three hares. A younger Vanille was holding an infant Crème. The other was presumably Crème's father. A marvelous wooden marionette sat on the workbench, half painted.

However, apart from the workbench and a few small pieces of furniture, the woodshed was otherwise sparse. Then, Ruby gulped at the sight of the racks of implements hanging on the walls, a wooden paddle, a cane, a leather strap. Ruby guessed that the woodshed had once been a carpenter's workshop, until Vanille had converted it into a dedicated space for punishing juvenile delinquents sentenced to "community service."

Annie knew from experience what Ruby only guessed at. The workbench had once belonged to Vanille's husband. After he had passed away, Vanille had sold or donated most of the woodworking equipment, with the exception of his prized workbench and

whittling tools, which she left untouched, except for keeping it dusted.

But Vanille was a practical hare, and believed in putting useful things to use. The spanking implements, (some inherited from their parents and grandparents), and the shed itself were never allowed to gather cobwebs. Every parent in Floral Forest Village had Vanille's permission to make use of the woodshed, and took advantage of the privilege, to the point that Vanille had hung a clipboard so that parents could reserve slots in advance.

After Vanille released her hold on Annie and Ruby's ears, she snatched up the clipboard and pinned a "Do Not Disturb" sign to it, before hanging it outside the door. Annie shuffled her feet, wondering just how long Vanille planned to keep them here. Ruby, on the other hand, was so fixated by the wall of spanking implements, she failed to notice anything, until Vanille placed a straight-backed wooden chair smack in the center of the room.

Vanille took a deep breath, her hand resting on the back of the decorative chair rest. "All right, girls, I want to hear what you have to say for yourselves. Annie, why don't you start?"

Ruby barely stopped herself from covering her bottom with her trembling hands, opting instead to clench her fists at either side of her hips.

Annie swallowed a lump in her throat. Before Annie could speak up, Ruby interjected, "What's the point? Haven't you already decided to spank us, no matter what we say?"

Vanille took a calming breath. "Miss Ruby, I asked Annie first, so please give her a chance to speak without interruption. I promise I'll give you my full attention in a moment. In future, if you have an urgent question, please say, 'Excuse me,' rather than simply–"

"It's a fair question, isn't it? What's the point of dragging this out? To torture us?" Ruby barked.

Annie was stunned by Ruby's lack of manners. Years ago, Annie had learned the hard way that you always spoke politely in Vanille's house, especially when it was time for a spanking.

Vanille folded her hands neatly on her lap. "Would you like me to spank you right now, Miss Ruby?"

Although Vanille's voice contained no hint of anger, Ruby still sensed something that gave her pause. Ruby had already mentally accepted that she was going to get a spanking, but her heart was a tangle of conflicting passions. *"Just because I'm going to get spanked, doesn't mean I have to pretend to like it!"* Ruby thought privately.

Out loud, Ruby answered, "No, Ma'am!" in a resentful tone of voice.

Vanille nodded, accepting the polite words, and ignoring the rudeness hidden behind them. “Very good, Miss Ruby. In that case, I will answer your question. Based on what we’ve already discussed, we’ve established that you misrepresented your purpose in Floral Forest Village. Even if you hadn’t fibbed about your ‘mission from the President,’ your behavior in the town square would still have been a disgrace. If I catch a naughty child with her hand in the cookie jar, I can usually guess correctly that she’ll need a spanking. On the other hand, I believe in the presumption of innocence. This may not be a trial, but you deserve a chance to explain yourself.”

Annie trembled, hoping beyond hope that she might be spared a spanking today.

Ruby felt her temper cool down as she heard this explanation. She winced at being compared to a toddler, but began to wonder if she might be able to fast-talk her way out of this situation after all. Ruby tried to remember something, anything, from her espionage training that could apply now. Unfortunately, the topic of “How to Negotiate Your Way Out of a Spanking When You Know Full Well You Have it Coming,” had never come up.

Vanille paused to wait for a reply, only to watch Ruby squirm under her gaze. With a warm smile, Vanille turned her attention back to Annie. “Now, Annie, dear, why not begin at the beginning? Tell me everything, please.”

Before Annie opened her mouth, she knew her own words would condemn her. But Annie's fear of the inevitable spanking melted in a desire to pour her heart out to Mrs. Vanille. Annie rambled about her insane plan to find a Chis emerald, starting with a full confession of her mad scheme to win Sonar's hand in marriage.

Annie blushed as she heard Ruby barely hide her teasing snicker behind a pretend sneeze at the mention of the phrase "Operation: Get Sonar to Marry Me."

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The two pre-teen boys who had hoped to see a cat fight between Annie and Ruby, only for their hopes to be dashed, had been hanging out nonchalantly by the fence which marked Vanille the Hare's property. One was a quokka with muted, red violet fur, the second was a fox with fur the color of a blood orange. Both had the kind of unremarkable face that could easily be mistaken for anyone.

They couldn't help but notice when Vanille opened the door to hang a "Do Not Disturb" sign.

The young quokka cocked an eyebrow. "Well, that's mighty interesting!"

"We better make tracks, Barney," mused the fox.

Barney the Quokka rolled his eyes. “C’mon, Buddy! How many times have your parents hauled you to Vanille’s woodshed over the years? It’s practically public property!”

“Buddy” the Fox drummed his fingers to hide his nerves. “I told you, I want my nickname to be ‘Rookie!’ Anyway, Vanille just hung the ‘Do Not Disturb’ sign.”

Barney flashed a dazzlingly white, toothy grin. “Then we’d better not disturb her!”

As they casually approached the woodshed, they found the cracks at the sides of the door were just wide enough for them to peek through without announcing their presence. A beautiful, hollow carving of a star in the door above their heads allowed them to hear everything perfectly.

“What are you two doing here? Are you in trouble?” chirped a high-pitched voice behind them.

Buddy and Barney clenched their teeth to hide their screams, and turned to find their neighbor, Honey the Squirrel, the same girl who had found Ruby’s taste in clothing so interesting.

“Honey? Scram! Beat it, kid!” hissed Barney.

“Please don’t rat us out!” whimpered Buddy.

Honey smiled adorably. “How about we skip the threats and arguments and get to the part where you two make room and let me watch too?”

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Vanille listened attentively, asking both Annie and Ruby probing questions until she had a full grasp of both sides of their story. When Annie mentioned how Ruby had stood between her and Berylin’s cannons, Vanille glanced at Ruby with a small smile. Unbeknownst to Ruby and Annie, Vanille was sympathetic, even impressed by their sheer pluck and daring, but Vanille was careful to maintain her poker face.

Finally, when they reached the point where Annie had used the Whacka-Mo Hammer to smash Ruby’s face and pole vault after the Cosmic Gemstone intended for her engagement ring, Vanille sighed and rubbed her temples. “Annie, dear, I think your admiration for Sonar is sweet, but you can’t use your feelings as an excuse to act like a fool. You can’t force love.”

Ruby smirked, gesturing to her breasts delicately. “Yeah, men can’t stand a girl who tries to smother them. If you want to trap a man, you’ve got to let him think he’s the one chasing after you. Act *less* interested. They love that. It makes you mysterious!”

Vanille's ears twitched. "Please don't interrupt, Miss Ruby. I've already warned you once!"

It wasn't that Vanille disagreed with Ruby, but as a mother, Vanille was worried what disaster could unfold if Annie started taking lessons in the art of seduction from the voluptuous vampire bat. "All right, I've heard you both out. While I understand that the fight began as a simple misunderstanding, none of that excuses you for attacking Berylin *after* he had offered a peace. All the damage to town property, and the risk to the families here, was a direct result of the choice you both made to attack him. You're both very lucky that Berylin showed such remarkable restraint. You didn't just endanger my family and neighbors, you endangered yourselves!"

Annie and Ruby both flinched, glancing at each other sheepishly. They'd been embarrassed before, but at the thought of the danger they'd caused, both felt a fresh wave of shame, crashing down on top of the humiliation.

Vanille gestured to the corner of the shed. "Miss Ruby, please, go stand in the corner while I deal with Annie first. I want you to watch how she behaves during a spanking and pay attention."

Annie felt a tingle travel up the small of her back at the mention of the spanking. So, this was it. She'd known it was coming all along, and now it was here.

However silly it had been to hope that Vanille would spare their backsides, that small hope had been a small comfort.

When that hope died, Annie was prepared, but Ruby was not.

Ruby felt the blood rush to her cheeks. “Stand in the corner? Like I’m a kid in timeout? Ugh! I knew this whole spiel about hearing us out was just a game to drag this–”

The bat lost her voice as she saw Vanille gracefully stand up to tower above her. “Yes, Miss Ruby. I’m putting you in timeout. And when I call you out of the corner, it will be your turn for a spanking. I don’t want to ‘drag this out’ a moment longer than I have to. So if *you* don’t want to ‘drag this out,’ I suggest you obey, now. Because I will punish you as long as necessary to correct your behavior. Now, you march right to the corner, and not one more word from you!”

Ruby dug in her heels, before remembering her broken high heel was still missing, and wobbled awkwardly, before fixing Vanille with a defiant stare. “But! … Whoops! But, I–”

Vanille’s motherly reflexes were quicker than Ruby’s ninja reflexes. Taking Ruby firmly by the wrist in a single smooth motion, Vanille sat back down in her high-backed chair, so that Ruby half-stumbled across the maternal lap, right into the spanking position.

Without further delay, Vanille began to spank Ruby, delivering a flurry of rapid-fire spanks that left the bat gasping and struggling in her grasp. Instantly, Ruby thrust her right hand behind her back to shield her bottom, her left hand scrambling wildly at the back of the chair. “Dammit! That hurts!”

Annie was stunned. She was used to seeing Vanille calmly and politely invite her or Crème to lie across her knee when it was time to start. Annie had never dared to resist a spanking the way Ruby was now.

Catching Annie’s look of terror, Vanille willed herself to remain composed, silently cursing herself for starting the punishment so awkwardly. Vanille had made up her mind that Ruby was not all bad, but the bat certainly needed a lesson in manners. Vanille was determined to regain control of Ruby, and that meant controlling her own annoyance *at* Ruby.

Adjusting her grip on Ruby’s waist to hold her firmly in place, Vanille slowed the pace of the spanking, but didn’t stop, letting the sound of the spanks echo through the woodshed, punctuated by Ruby's howls of pain and protest as she failed to block a single swat with her free hand.

Ignoring Ruby’s hand, Vanille slowed the tempo of the spanking even further, aiming a new spank wherever Ruby wasn’t blocking,

and allowing Ruby to blindly block the new spot, only to aim another spank at the old spot.

Vanille wanted Ruby to obey of her own choice, if possible. By slowing down the pace, Vanille had given Ruby time to figure out that her resistance was futile. Vanille pretended to finally notice Ruby's hand for the first time. "Hands down, Ruby. You should grip the legs of the chair to support your weight."

"No!" spat Ruby. Vanille shrugged and continued to deliver spanks to unpredictable spots on Ruby's spandex clad bum. With a roar, Ruby twisted, and wobbled dangerously. But for the fact that Vanille was holding her waist firmly in place, Ruby would have face planted on the wooden floor.

With a frustrated growl, Ruby grasped the legs of the chair to support herself, but not out of a desire to obey. Reflexively, she kicked up her legs to shield her behind.

Vanille calmly began to remove Ruby's boots, as if this had been her plan all along. "Ah, yes, thank you, Miss Ruby. I should have had these off much earlier! You won't be able to stand in the corner for long with a broken high heel!"

Ruby felt her toes wriggle free of her once proud white boots, leaving her in only black stockings. "Don't!!!"

“Please put your legs down, Miss Ruby.”

Ruby gripped the legs of the chair so tightly, she felt the wood grain press into the skin of her palms. “Dammit!”

Casually, Vanille guided Ruby’s legs away from her backside, and adjusted the bat’s position over her lap, so that her legs dangled down to the ground.

Vanille wished she wasn’t wearing her long dress, so that she could hook Ruby’s legs in place, but she also knew that gravity was her ally. Sooner or later, Ruby would mentally accept that she couldn’t hold her legs up forever.

“Miss Ruby, I hope your parents didn’t raise you to use naughty words. Whatever the case, as long as you are under my authority, you will make an effort to refrain from using either foul or profane language.”

“F**k you, ya’ long-eared, buck-toothed b***h!” Ruby roared.

Fortunately, the network censor caught it and added bleeps before any impressionable children could hear. Annie was frozen like a deer in headlights, until Vanille caught her eye. “Annie, be a dear and fetch me a bar of Ivory soap. You’ll find a fresh one in the cabinet under the kitchen sink.”

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"Incoming!" whispered Buddy the Fox. The three Peeping Toms scrambled around the side of the woodshed, barely escaping detection as Annie burst out the door, before remembering to close it softly behind her. Long ago, Annie had learned the hard way you don't slam doors around Vanille.

As they watched Annie make her way towards Vanille and Crème's cottage, Barney, Buddy, and Honey considered their situation.

Barney thought out loud. "Maybe this was a bad idea after all?"

"Have some balls!" hissed Honey the Squirrel. Ordinarily, she would never dare to use such a phrase, which would easily have earned her a trip to Vanille's woodshed if Mrs. Squirrel had heard it. But the thrill of being bad for once was intoxicating. The boys silently nodded.

Not daring to approach the door, they waited for Roza to return, and contented themselves with listening in as Vanille began to spank Ruby again. It was lucky the window muffled the sound slightly, or the three miscreants would have heard Ruby shouting every profanity that exists in English, French, and Spanish.

***

Having finished setting the table, Crème and Saucer the Cosmo sat obediently on the living room sofa, reading Little Golden Books in a vain attempt to distract themselves from the knowledge that either Miss Annie or Miss Ruby were most likely being spanked at that very moment.

Crème and Saucer's books flew in the air as Annie appeared at the front door, marching stiffly toward the kitchen, just like a soldier, except that she covered her bottom with both hands.

Crème peeked from behind the arm of the sofa. "Annie? Did Mom finish your spanking already?"

Annie felt a bead of sweat trickle down her forehead as she searched for the dreaded soap bar. "No! She hasn't even started!"

A question mark appeared over Saucer's head. "Chi? Chi chi chi?" [Translation: "Annie? Did you use a potty mouth?"]

Annie nodded stiffly, before shaking her head furiously, understanding Saucer's language with ease. "No! It's not for me, it's for Ruby!"

"Oh no! What did Miss Ruby say?" asked Crème.

Annie gagged at the mere memory of the taste of soap, after she had said the word "hell" in front of Vanille. "Nuh uh! I'm not going to repeat it! It was really bad! They were swear words you don't know!"

Crème waved Annie out the front door, and pretended to zip her lip. "Okay, Annie! I don't want to know them. Thanks for not telling me, I might say one on accident!"

***

When Annie opened the door of the woodshop, she was greeted by the sight of Ruby holding herself firmly in place across Vanille's lap, humming and hissing as she endured a slow, steady series of spanks. Vanille's plan had worked, and Ruby had finally settled herself down, not out of a spirit of obedience, but only because she'd given up on the idea of physically shielding her backside.

Annie remembered her manners. "Excuse me, Mrs. Vanille. Do you want me to put this in Ruby's mouth for you?"

Ruby whistled in discomfort, and so missed hearing part of Annie's question. "Wah? What's it for? ... *Kiyaaah!*"

Vanille landed a sharp, deliberate spank before answering Annie. In response, Ruby squeaked, then bit her lip, in a desperate bid to conceal her discomfort.

Vanille flashed a buck-toothed smile as she raised her hand slowly. "Not quite yet, Annie, dear. I want to have words with Miss Ruby first." Vanille landed a final, crisp clap to the low-center region of Ruby's rump. The former femme fatale's face flinched in fury as she swallowed a scream. Nevertheless, Ruby couldn't resist the urge to moan.

Annie watched in awe, holding out the box of soap demurely in case it was needed.

Vanille let the moment hang, until she was sure she had Ruby's attention. "All right, Miss Ruby. You've made things worse for yourself, but you have an opportunity to course correct right now. I have one simple question. Are you ready to obey?"

Ruby relaxed her grip on the legs of the chair slightly and fidgeted her legs, feeling a crackling, buzzing sting as the black spandex stretched across her buttocks. She was painfully aware of the trapped heat in her seat, which also reminded her of how trapped she felt across Vanille's lap. "Yeah, whatever! What choice do I have?"

Vanille replied by landing two ferocious spanks in quick succession to the center of each cheek. Again, she let Ruby squirm pathetically before collapsing back into place. "You always have a choice, Miss Ruby, even in the most trying of times. If you want to obey, let's try a more polite response with less sass. Say, 'Yes, ma'am. I'm ready to obey.'"

Ruby glowered over her shoulder, flashing her vampiric fangs at Vanille. “No! I’m a grown woman! I’ll say whatever I want!”

Vanille only smiled. “Annie, dear, fetch me a tawse from the wall. The shortest one with two tongs, please.”

Annie accidentally juggled the box of Ivory soap in her hurry to obey, then set it down apologetically by Ruby’s face to free her hands.

Ruby’s attention snapped to the wall of implements. “The hell’s a tawse? … Yeouch! … Yeeow!” Vanille’s only answer to Ruby’s question was a spank to her left, upper thigh, followed by a two second pause, before landing a second spank to the right thigh to match.

Then Ruby saw it. The “smallest” tawse was an embroidered leather strap about a foot long, divided into two ominous looking strips that reminded Ruby of a serpent’s forked tongue. The leather was set into a wooden handle, which Vanille knew would allow for easier gripping while holding Ruby in this position. The longer straps, without handles, were even more menacing, but were impractical unless the disciplinarian was able to stand and use the full range of motion of her arm.

“All in good time, Miss Ruby,” answered Vanille, momentarily resisting the mental image of giving her bratty charge a proper flogging with a full sized tawse. It’s a sad fact that most spanking implements are impractical if the spankee is being uncooperative.

Annie cradled the the short tawse in both hands before offering it to Vanille, then backed away, subconsciously wanting to be as far away from the range of the strap as possible.

Ruby’s eyes went wide as she saw Vanille raise the tawse high above her rear end. “Hold on! Maybe we can–”

Ruby’s special ops training had included advanced hostage negotiation tactics. Unfortunately for Ruby, Vanille firmly believed in the tried and true rule for parents: “Never negotiate with terrorists.”

The short tawse landed squarely over the center of Ruby’s behind, covering both cheeks in two neat lines.

Just the sound of it sent Annie’s knees knocking. The swing produced a soft whoosh of air, and the impact was snappier than even the crispest spank Vanille could achieve using only her hand.

From Ruby’s perspective, she had just entered into a new state of heightened awareness. It was as though both strips of leather were tugging at her spandex as they glided across her cheeks. Not only did

Ruby's outfit provide practically no protection, it actually created more friction, holding Ruby's pert, perky posterior perfectly in place.

Ruby's attempts to look cool vanished. Vanille carefully landed six strokes with the strap, making sure to maximize the effect of each as Ruby roared.

As Vanille landed the sixth stroke, she noticed the fabric of Ruby's spy outfit was starting to run. *"What on earth possessed this girl to walk around dressed in such an impractical outfit?"* mused Vanille.

For her part, Ruby felt six sets of welts as they slowly rose in place in neat lines, pressing against the tight fabric, and finally started to regret her wardrobe choice.

Vanille repeated her question as if nothing had happened. "Miss Ruby. Are you ready to obey?"

In sharp contrast to Vanille's imperturbable poise, Ruby was very aware of the danger she was in, now more so than ever. She had tried every trick in the book, everything that usually worked! Ruby the Roussette always viewed herself as a high-class woman. All she wanted was to preserve some of her dignity. And in her frustration, Ruby knowingly sealed her fate. "You can kiss my perfect, lily white, furry ass!"

Vanille sighed, then set the tawse down across Ruby's back. "Very well, Miss Ruby."

Ruby felt Vanille's knee lifting up gently beneath her, raising her hips up slightly into the air. "Hey! What're you doing?"

In answer, Vanille neatly tugged down Ruby's black spandex pants by the waistband, revealing cheeky black and pink underpants decorated with lace and hearts. The word "Magnifique" was printed across the center of Ruby's panties in florid, white script.

As she inspected her victim's underpants, Vanille narrowed her eyes. "I'm trying to help you, Miss Ruby. This spanking is supposed to be a character-building experience. For it to have any positive effect on you, you and I must come to an understanding. A proper spanking is a cooperative exercise. I don't suppose you'd consider lifting your bottom a little? Even that would be a helpful start."

"Why should I?"

Vanille answered by landing three crisp claps, one for each syllable of the word "Magnifique."

Ruby caterwauled, then continued to run her mouth, but Vanille ignored the bat's furious protests. "Annie, I'm sorry to ask this of you, but please help me lower these inappropriate undergarments."

Annie nodded and sprang to action, knowing that as long as Ruby was uncooperative, her panties were pinned in place. Annie blushed, imagining how ridiculous she'd look in Ruby's getup, and half-wondering if guys like Sonar actually liked that stuff, before dodging Ruby's kicking feet to tug the spandex leggings down to her knees. This held Ruby's legs in place long enough for Annie to pinch Ruby's panties with both hands and gracefully lower them down, just below her bottom.

Sure enough, Ruby had a perfect, lilly white, furry ass.

"Noooo! You can't do this to me!" At this discovery, Ruby's complaints reached a crescendo, but Vanille studiously ignored the noise.

Before Annie could retreat back to the wall, Vanille caught Annie's eye, and scooped up the tawse from Ruby's back. "Thank you, Annie. Open the box of soap. We're going to give Miss Ruby another chance to do the right thing."

For Annie's sake, Vanille was concealing her nerves behind stoicism. Inside, Vanille was secretly worried whether she could really handle such a strong-willed young woman. She could only hope Ruby's horrendous behavior wouldn't influence Annie, and she was determined to nip this in the bud before allowing Ruby to spend one night under her roof.

Vanille had never dealt with such stubbornness from Crème or Ruby, but she remembered her parents' sage advice: even the most difficult child deserves an opportunity to choose to obey.

Despite everything, Vanille believed that Ruby wasn't completely incorrigible. Once Ruby had learned to accept her fate, she could be trained, like any other child in need of instruction.

Vanille had decided to give Ruby yet another chance, but she also knew she had to get Ruby's attention. Without further ado, Vanille raised the tawse and aimed it expertly across Ruby's bare bat butt.

"This is completely unnecessary! I'm a–*AAAIIIEEE!!!*" Ruby's complaints immediately vanished, to be replaced by shrieks. Now that Ruby's bottom was free of the constraints of her outfit, the six pale red stripes were now faintly visible beneath her thin, downy white fur.

But it was the embarrassment, more than the pain that shut Ruby up. As she felt her own leggings catch on her legs, preventing her from bucking off of Vanille's terrible lap, Ruby's pretense of being a dangerous, commanding girlboss was burning away like straw.

After another six strokes from the tawse over her bare bottom, Ruby's caboose was now covered with twelve sets of welts, neatly overlapping each other in horizontal rows. At the far edge of her

right butt cheek, the split in the leather tawse produced a more fiery, criss cross pattern.

Still resolutely resisting the urge to break down completely, Ruby gasped for air, her head dangling low toward the ground in exhaustion.

Satisfied, Vanille set down the tawse and switched her grip on Ruby's waist, delicately lifting up Ruby's chin with her free left hand. "Now that I have your full attention, Miss Ruby, let's discuss the position you are in. Before we can address your impolite and foul language, we first need to address your deliberate disobedience. If you agree to be brave and obey, we can end this much more quickly."

Feeling a smarting afterburn from her welts, Ruby swallowed a nasty retort. "What... what do you want from me?"

Before answering, Vanille guided Ruby's chin so that her attention was pointed to Annie. "First, we're going to cure you of that terrible potty mouth. Open wide, and let Annie wash your mouth out with soap. Annie, hold the bar in place until you're sure Ruby has a good hold on it."

Realizing this was her cue, Annie yanked the Ivory soap free, dropping the box in her rush. Ruby's eyes flicked from the soap in front of her to Vanille behind her. Ruby felt Vanille gently pinch her

cheeks, and opened her mouth reflexively. The smell of the Ivory soap was so pleasant, but Ruby knew from childhood experience what to expect next. Only the fear of the strap enabled Ruby to keep her mouth open and let Annie place the bar on her tongue.

For a few seconds, Ruby hoped that maybe Ivory soap had improved in flavor over the years, but the pleasant smell was quickly replaced by the same acrid, bitter taste of soap suds that she remembered all too well.

With a gag, Ruby spat the bar out with such force, it bounced on the ground. Annie hopped back in surprise.

Ruby spat, soapy drool dribbling down her chin. "No! You can't make me!"

In a flash, Vanille released her grip on Ruby's chin, gripped her waist, scooped the tawse back up, and landed a nasty diagonal stroke that stretched from Ruby's lower left cheek, landing on her upper right hip with a resounding, *"Snick!"*

Vanille waited for Ruby's howl to die away as she raised the tawse. "Repeat after me: 'Yes, ma'am. I'm ready to obey, please.'"

Ruby fought to calm her mind, pressing her legs together instinctively to relieve the burning sting. "Yuh–yes, ma'am! I'll obey! I'll take the spanking, just not the soap… please!"

Vanille angled a second diagonal stroke, this one across both of Ruby's thighs, starting at her upper left thigh, and wrapping across her lower right thigh. The best feature of the tawse was its whipping quality, and Vanille knew that landing fresh strokes on "unmarked territory" would keep Ruby acutely aware of that fact. Vanille repeated her instructions over Ruby's wail of agony. "Repeat after me: 'Yes, ma'am. I'm ready to obey, please."

Ruby caught the gist. "Yes, ma'am! I'm ready to obey! Please, not the soap!"

Vanille landed the third stroke over the center of Ruby's bottom, leaving a new, angry welt on top of several previous ones. "Do not add anything else, Miss Ruby. No ifs, ands, or buts. Say, 'Yes, ma'am! I'm ready to obey, please!'"

Ruby finally obeyed, gasping. "Yes!—Ma'am!—I'm ready to... obey, please!"

With a sigh of relief, Vanille placed a quick smack on Ruby's quivering bottom, just enough to remind her of how sore it still was. Vanille was pleased to see Ruby stiffen and resolutely hold herself in place. Despite everything, Vanille couldn't help but admire Ruby's spunk. She knew that once Ruby had discovered the importance of obedience, everything would be much easier. A good spanking was all about instilling the proper mentality!

“Deliberate disobedience, wilful defiance, general bad manners, and language from the gutter. Any one of these character flaws would be bad enough, but together they are making your life much worse than it has to be, Miss Ruby. You asked to accept my guidance. Are you having second thoughts? Would you prefer to see the Sheriff?”

Ruby’s ears perked up. The temptation to escape further pain and humiliation was much more enticing while she was laying over the knee. But Ruby remembered her earlier decision to submit to Vanille’s authority. Underneath the seductive act, Ruby had a warrior’s spirit. No matter how dangerous the mission, Ruby was determined to see it through to the end. “No!”

Vanille landed another quick slap, this time on the side of Ruby’s bottom where the lashes of the tawse had missed a few spots. “Correction, ‘No, ma’am.’”

“No, ma’am!” Ruby barked like a freshly recruited soldier.

“Do you think you deserve to have your mouth washed out with soap, Miss Ruby?”

Ruby’s eyes flicked open, wondering if an honest answer would earn her another whipping. “Nuh… yes, ma’am, I think?”

Annie tilted her head, curious what Vanille was up to, and momentarily forgetting the trouble she was in. “Really, Ruby? You don’t sound convinced.”

At a single glance from Vanille, Annie squeaked and covered her mouth, pressing the bar of soap against her lips. “Sorry, Mrs. Vanille!”

“It’s okay, Annie. Just remember to say, ‘Excuse me,’ next time.”

Annie nodded furiously, and whispered, “Yes’m!” She awkwardly retrieved the soap box, hoping that her slip of the tongue wouldn’t come back to bite her in the rear end later.

Vanille placed a comforting hand on Ruby’s head. “Miss Ruby, you don’t have to say the answer you think I want to hear. Of course, I want a polite answer, but I also want a truthful one. Do you think you deserve to have your mouth washed out with soap, yes or no?”

Ruby hesitated, but the pat on her head reminded how her parents used to ruffle her hair as a little vampire bat. “Well… No, ma’am?”

Ruby stiffened, expecting another round of spanking, but none came. Vanille answered with perfect composure, “I see. I disagree but I want to hear your reasoning. Why is that, Ruby?”

Ruby hunched her shoulders, lowering her head to the floor. “Well, my parents only did that when I was a child, but I’m grown up now. Don’t I have a right to free speech… ma’am?”

“It’s not an issue of legal rights. It’s an issue of right and wrong. Do you think it was right to use the F-word and to call me a…what was it?” Vanille blushed even as she self-censored the phrase, “Ah, yes, a long-eared, buck-toothed, b-word?”

Ruby rubbed her feet together. “No, ma’am. I’m sorry.”

Vanille grinned, “I accept your apology. Now, in my humble opinion, a mouth-washing is the least you deserve. A spanking is a punishment for children, too, but you were willing to accept that. Why would a little soap be a bridge too far?”

“Because… I didn’t expect it! Last time I got my mouth washed out with soap, I was six years old. I didn’t think I was agreeing to that!”

Vanille’s ears perked up. At least, Ruby’s parents hadn’t been completely permissive. “What kinds of words were you not allowed to say as a child?”

Ruby felt a small fleck of soap that had caught on her sharp bat tooth brush against her tongue. She half-choked, sticking out her tongue at the taste. As she caught Vanille’s eye, Ruby quickly slurped her tongue back into her mouth, worried that Vanille would

interpret the gesture as an insult. Thankfully, Vanille patiently awaited Ruby's answer. "You know, the f-word, the s-word, the c-word, the d-word…"

*"Woah, there are that many swear words?"* thought Annie nervously.

Vanille removed her hand from Ruby's head and adjusted her grip on Ruby's waist. "What about the a-word and the b-word?"

*"Wait, so 'butt' isn't the b-word?"* Annie felt silly for not realizing it earlier.

Ruby swallowed, only to nearly gag on the last remains of soap suds in her mouth. "Yes, ma'am. I wasn't allowed to say those either."

"I see. If you're going to stay with us, I'd prefer you not teach my daughter new swear words. You should know that in my house, I don't permit Crème or Annie to use words like, 'Damn,' or 'Hell.' As long as you remain under my mouth, you will be subject to the same rules as Annie and Crème."

Even at the sound of those lesser curse words, Annie stiffened.

Ruby's eyes went wide. "Crap! Are you serious—uh, ma'am?"

Vanille sighed. "Yes, and before you ask, 'crap' is also a word that'd merit a mouth-washing for Annie or Crème. I appreciate that your

parents might have had different rules when you were growing up, but I don't want my daughter to develop the habit of using obscene language, even light profanity."

"But... I use those words all the time?"

"Then you will make an effort to change your habits."

Ruby felt tears welling up in her eyes. Her prospects were getting worse and worse! "But... wait!"

At the mention of the word "But," Vanille landed a warning pat, which was more than enough to remind Ruby of the stinging welts. "You're doing much better, Ruby. Try to form your thoughts first, then it will be easier to express them politely."

Ruby quickly self-corrected. "Sorry, ma'am! Excuse me, but I don't even know all the words you consider bad! Am... Am I going to spend all week going over your knee with a bar of soap in my mouth?"

Vanille felt sympathy. Already "Miss Ruby the Brat" was transforming into a young lady in need of a little correction.

Vanille set Ruby back on her feet and looked her in the eye, her voice firm, but not unkind. "Don't worry, dear. I believe in showing patience when children make simple mistakes. Let's start with the

basics. You know the kinds of naughty words that are obviously bad enough to merit a spanking and a mouth-washing. The a-word, the b-word, the c-word, the d-word, the f-word…Any usage of those will merit you an instant trip across my knee, before being sent to time out with a bar of soap to chew on. For less serious words, all I ask is that you make an effort. I won't be so quick to resort to the full punishment if you let slip a "hell" by mistake, but I reserve the right to do both if I think it will help you break your bad habit. Is that clear?"

Ruby still felt a clutching sensation in her stomach, but the reassuring quality in Vanille's voice helped relieve her despair. She held her hands to cover her front, and caught a quick peek of her sore red bottom. Even so, now that she was back on her feet, Ruby felt a little more grown-up now. "Yes, I… I'll try, Ma'am!"

Vanille pointed to direct Ruby's attention to Annie. "Very good, Ruby. That's all I ask. In that case, that brings us back to the beginning. Are you ready to obey?"

Remembering the earlier words that she had been forced to repeat, Ruby hung her head and answered, "Yes, ma'am. I'm ready to obey, please."

"Then go apologize to Annie for spitting the bar of soap at her, and politely ask her to put it back in your mouth. Then march your naughty little bottom straight back here and across my lap."

Ruby winced at the mention of the word "naughty," and the realization that her spanking was not over. With a defeated sigh, Ruby approached Annie and followed her marching orders, feeling her leggings catch around her ankles. "I'm sorry for spitting the bar of soap at you, Miss Roza. You can put it back, now, I'm ready, please."

As Ruby tasted the bar, still damp with spittle from before, the sudsy taste immediately filled her eyes with tears. Ruby grimaced as she heard Vanille pat her lap invitingly, and turned to waddle back towards her fate. Would she feel the terrible strap again? Ruby knew she couldn't take much more. Her interrogation training to become a special agent had included waterboarding, but not even that had prepared her for this!

With Ruby back in place over her lap, Vanille reflected on the beautiful change in Ruby's demeanor. It was as though harmony and good order was being restored to the world! Vanille offered the tawse to Annie, making a point of holding it in Ruby's field of vision. "Annie, hold the tawse for me. If Miss Ruby is careful, I don't think I'll need it again today, but be ready in case I ask for it back."

As Ruby exhaled with relief, she made a whistling sound, and a few soap bubbles flew off the Ivory Soap bar.

Vanille gave Ruby a few pats on each cheek. “Very good, young lady. Now that we’ve addressed your deliberate disobedience, and your foul language, we can finally address your general impoliteness. In my home, it is not enough for a child to simply follow the rote forms of obedience and good manners. Your attitude speaks volumes. Before we began this spanking, your poor attitude made everything much worse for you. Now that your attitude has improved somewhat, we can finally finish what we started. I’m going to give you ten more swats. Hold tight onto that bar of soap. If you let it drop, I’ll add an additional ten swats. Are you ready?”

Ruby nodded, feeling the soap suds pooling below her tongue. Not one of her taste buds was spared! She tried to say, “Yes, ma’am,” but all she could manage was, “Mss-hmm!”

"Thank you dear, dear. No need to try and speak with that in your mouth, just focus on holding that soap bar in place," Vanille replied as she raised her hand, a hint of satisfaction in her voice.

As though she was dealing with a naughty toddler who was only in need of a brief smacking, Ruby delivered the first of ten firm whacks, which was all she had initially planned on giving Ruby before their contest of wills.

Ruby gripped the legs of the chair again, now eager to obey with the finish line so close in sight. But as the ninth whack landed, she pursed her lips. With a clean *“Pop!”* the soap flew from her mouth.

Vanille's hand paused in mid air. Everyone froze, even Annie, their eyes on the soap bar.

Blowing frothy soap from her mouth, Ruby spluttered, "I'm sorry, Ma'am! It was an accident! I didn't mean it."

Vanille sighed, and bent over to pick the bar up. "I believe you, Ruby, dear. Here's a tip: try and bite down on the bar slightly to keep it in place."

Ruby sniffled, tears streaming down her cheeks, coughing up suds from the back of her throat as she accepted the bar again. She knew she had eleven swats to go, and wondered if she would ever be allowed up off of Vanille's lap again at this rate.

After letting Ruby clamp down on the bar and catch her breath, Vanille delivered the tenth spank, letting her hand rest to feel the radiant heat from Ruby's seat. "There, that's ten. You may stand up, Ruby, dear."

Ruby's eyes snapped open, vision blurred by tears. Ruby tried to say, "But, didn't you say you'd give me ten more spanks?"

Thanks to the soap bar, what came out of her mouth instead was more like, "Muh? Biddn' moo fffaw moodth bib vee then mooah thpanks?"

Vanille wanted to giggle, but decided to preserve her resolute poker face for just a moment longer. “Yes, dear, I did promise you another ten spanks if you dropped the soap bar. Do you think you deserve another spanking?”

Ruby felt tears return to her eyes, but didn’t break eye contact. “Mmyeth, ba’ambuh?”

Vanille guessed correctly that Ruby was trying to answer yes. “Well, that’s very brave. Now, just to warn you, this spanking was to correct your attitude. I was going to give Annie her spanking first before you interrupted me.”

Annie shuffled her feet at the mention of her coming spanking. Whenever Annie and Crème were in trouble, Annie never knew what was worse: to get spanked first, or be forced to wait. Now, Annie was sure she knew the answer. She wished her spanking had been over long ago, rather than have to endure this terrible dread.

Vanille continued to calmly explain to Ruby the dilemma she was in. “That means that after I finish spanking Annie, you and I still need to discuss your behavior earlier today, which got you into this fix in the first place.”

Horrible comprehension dawned on Ruby’s face. “Myoo meem mwee babben’pffimmishth?”

Vanille made a careful effort to remain patient, but plucked the soap from Ruby's mouth. "Oh, good gracious, let me take that out so you can speak clearly."

Ruby noticed Vanille didn't bother to wait for her to answer before removing the soap, and decided to be extra polite just in case. "Pfft! Bleh! Ahem, excuse me! You mean we haven't finished....ma'am?"

"No, Ruby, I mean we haven't started."

Ruby's lip trembled. She realized that everything she had just experienced, she had brought on herself. Ruby looked back at Annie, knowing how absurd she must look to the kid, painfully aware of her bare buttocks, glowing like two incandescent red light bulbs. "Yes, ma'am! I... I promise to obey you, whatever you decide!"

"Very good, Ruby. And do you still think you still deserve an extra ten spanks for dropping the soap bar?"

Ruby's lips scrunched into a conflicted expression. "Yes, ma'am."

Vanille slowly stood up, towering over the quivering bat before putting a reassuring hand on her shoulder. "Well, I agree you deserve another spanking... but not for a minor mistake like dropping the soap. You promised to obey, whatever I decided, and I've decided to spare your bottom that at least. For now, you will go stand in

timeout, like I asked before, and watch while I finish with Annie. Keep this bar of soap in your mouth the whole time, and bite down so you don't drop it again. Or else, you know what to expect. Watch Annie carefully. You'll be getting just the same as her soon enough. Open your mouth, please."

Ruby felt her heart melt at the reassuring words and gesture, before the threat of the soap and an additional spanking came crashing down. Ruby pouted, and when instructed to open her mouth, obeyed, but deliberately sighed and glowered to make it clear she wasn't happy. Vanille caught the gesture, but decided to spare Ruby the spanking Annie or Crème would have immediately earned for such a stunt.

Trying to rub the lingering sting from her butt cheek with one hand, Ruby reached down to pull up her leggings with the other, only to feel Vanille plant a sharp warning swat on her rump. "No, Ruby. No rubbing. And the rule in my house is: a bare bottom remains bare until the spanking is completely over. Not that those silly tights do much to hide it anyway. Your behavior today was shameful, and I want you to learn to have some shame. Think very carefully about everything that has happened today, and about what is coming to you soon enough, while you are standing in time out."

Ruby marched to the corner, in a huff, and with a harrumph. Unfortunately, the grunt, combined with the wet sound of flying soap suds, was obnoxious enough to catch Vanille's attention.

Clearly, a strong-willed young lady like Ruby needed clear rules and boundaries. “On second thought, I won’t have you *stand* in the corner after all. Annie, fetch the old timeout stool from behind the long-bench. I think you remember it. Miss Ruby, we’ll let you *sit* in timeout instead!”

Ruby’s chest tightened as she twisted to look at Vanille over her shoulder. The ominous tone in Vanille’s voice warned her that something bad was coming, but what could it possibly be?

Annie’s hair stood on end as she retrieved “the timeout stool.” In all the years she had known Crème and Vanille, Annie had never seen Vanille use it on Crème. On one occasion only, Annie had been introduced to it when she’d argued with Vanille about being too old for a spanking (shortly after, and as a direct result of, the disastrous incident where she’d used a magical ring to wish to age herself several years to become a teenager). Annie brought the stool to Ruby without daring to look at it and set it down, backing away from it as if she was afraid it would pounce on her.

As she examined it, Ruby instantly understood its purpose. The seat of the tall wooden stool was covered in a pattern of wooden pyramid shapes, each about one-inch high and sanded to a smooth finish. The pyramids wouldn’t puncture her skin, but it would be like sitting on a bed of nails.

The soap in Ruby's mouth seemed to droop in dismay as she looked at Vanille, with a silent plea for mercy.

Vanille gestured invitingly with her palm. "Have a seat, Miss Ruby."

Ruby resisted the urge to sit, before catching sight of the long line of spanking implements hanging behind Vanille, and with an effort lifted herself up onto the stool. It was so tall, she couldn't support her weight with her feet. She had no choice but to press her bottom down fully onto the seat, the pyramids seeming to sink into her tender hindquarters like a lion's teeth in a haunch of red meat.

As she tried to shift her feet to the rungs of the stool to relieve the pressure on her seat, Ruby discovered the devious design of a disciplinary genius. Even the supporting beams of the stool had been deliberately placed so that if she tried to lift her feet and support her weight on them, lifting her legs would only tighten her glutes and increase her discomfort. If she tried to lower her feet to the bottom rungs, she still couldn't support her weight enough to make much difference, and the effort caused her sit spots to bunch up and press into the sharp points like dough.

Nevertheless, Ruby couldn't help fidgeting from position to position, if only to provide relief from one part of her bottom by sacrificing another. The heavy stool stood steady as she wriggled from side to side atop it, as though the carpenter had anticipated this as well.

Vanille sighed with relief. Finally, after dealing with Ruby's rebellious streak, it seemed like she was over the hump. Despite her propensity for hare-brained antics, Vanille knew Annie was a delightful girl.

Once Ruby saw how well Annie could take a spanking, everything would move more smoothly. Maybe Vanille would even have time to enjoy her calming cup of tea before supper, after missing tea time? "Annie, dear? It's your turn. So sorry for the delay! Now, come lie across my lap!"

Annie froze, before taking a hesitant step towards Vanille. Finally, after all the fear and anticipation, her spanking would be over! But as Annie forced herself to take a second step, a series of thoughts and visions spun in her head.

No! It *wouldn't* be over! It was only the beginning! There would surely be an additional bedtime spanking tonight to reinforce the lesson, at the very least. And after that, there was an entire week to look forward to! Who knew how many opportunities to earn a spanking were in store for her?

As Vanille's lap seemed to loom large before her, Annie caught sight of a glint of sunlight through the caved star pattern in the door of the wood shed. Of course! Escape! That was the answer!

“Now, Miss Ruby, watch closely and see how Annie handles a spank–”

“Waaaah!” wailed Annie as she dashed past Vanille and bolted for the door.

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Outside, all three Peeping Toms uttered one of the new swear words they had learned today as they saw Annie charging towards the door. Barney and Buddy only had time to press flat against the wall on either side of the door. Honey, who had claimed the best spot at the keyhole, snapped her head up! She couldn’t go left? She couldn’t go right?

There was no time!

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“Annie?” Vanille let out a cry of frustration and chased after her, her long legs carrying her swiftly across the room. She caught Annie just as she thrust open the door, scooping the young Needle-mouse around the waist.

“Noooo! Not a spanking! Anything but that!!!” Annie wailed out the door, loud enough for most of the village to hear.

Barney, Buddy, and Honey certainly heard it, their fur standing on end. Fortunately for Honey, the door of the shed swung outward. When Annie had thrust it open, the door had caught honey across the seat of her hoop skirt, pushing her forward and out of sight. If Annie or Vanille took a single step outside, all three would surely be spotted!

"Annie! Get a hold of yourself, young lady! Honestly! I expected more composure from you." Vanille groaned as she felt Annie clutch at the door frame. With a deft motion, Vanille lifted Annie up by the torso, tucking her tight under her arm, and landed a single firm slap over Annie's white panties.

"Yow!" howled Annie, releasing her death grip on the door frame. She strained her hands to grasp at midair, and caught the door handle, accidentally slamming it shut. As it slipped from her grip, Annie threw her hands back in an attempt to shield her bottom, but Vanille's iron under-arm hold prevented Annie from interfering.

"Annie, you bad girl, you've earned yourself an extra punishment for that little stunt," Vanille declared, her voice filled with determination. She landed an equally determined spank as she carried Roza back to the high backed chair.

As she saw the door, and all hope, moving farther away from her, Annie snapped out of her initial panic. Annie and Ruby made eye contact, and Annie knew precisely what Ruby was thinking.

*"Sorry, kid, you're on your own!"*

Annie knew no help was coming from that direction. It was like waking up out of a nightmare, to find herself in a nightmare. "Owwie! I'm... I'm sorry, Mrs. Vanille! I wasn't thinking!"

Vanille sighed, before patting Annie on the behind to let her catch her breath. Then the weary mother raised her hand to begin in earnest. "I forgive you, Annie, dear. And I hope this spanking will teach you to think more clearly in the future."

*"This is going to be a long day,"* thought Vanille, as she landed the first of a series of firm strokes.

As the spanking built to a quick, continuous tempo, both Annie and Ruby realized in terror that Annie would not be let off easy with a few quick warning slaps.

No, this under-the-arm spanking would be a proper spanking all by itself. And probably, the first of many, many spankings.

*"This is going to be a long, long day,"* thought Annie, and Ruby, before pain, sorrow, and self-pity drove all other thoughts away.

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Barney the Quokka, Buddy the Fox, and Honey the Squirrel's chests heaved as they all risked taking a single breath.

"That was too close! We gotta get out of here!" whined Honey, rubbing her tail, which had serendipitously caught the brunt of the force from the door bursting open.

"Oh, c'mon, Honey!" gasped Buddy.

"Have some balls!" wheezed Barney.

Honey stomped her foot and took a breath, ready to shout one of her new vocabulary words, before Buddy and Barney both shushed her, stammering apologies.

As the sounds of Annie's first spanking of the day started to pick up, the three co-conspirators nodded, and returned to their places.

*"So what if we get caught?"* thought Honey. *"I'd rather get spanked every day for the rest of my life than miss a second of this!"*

End of Chapter II

# Chapter III: Setting An Example

Ignoring Annie Roza's wails, Vanille the Hare sternly delivered firm, steady spanks across the pink Needle-mouse's panty clad posterior. Annie reflexively kicked her red boots once, before trying to hold as still as possible, desperate to show she was ready to be obedient.

As tears welled up in Annie's eyes, she felt her head rocking forward, and wondered if Mrs. Vanille was about to drop her. But Vanille kept an unbreakable grip on Annie's waist, and kept her securely pinned under one arm. Annie thought about how, after all these years, Mrs. Vanille could still easily hold up Annie's entire weight. "Oh, please, Mrs. Vanill—Ah! I won't do it again! ... Ow! ... Owwie!"

As Vanille landed another clap, then another, neither softening the pace nor the force of the spanking, she sighed softly. "I hope to see you keep that promise, Annie."

Vanille landed another swat for emphasis. "But I still have to give you a spanking to help you remember your promise. Understand?"

Annie's lip trembled. "Yes, ma'am."

After delivering another smack, Vanille nodded. "Very good. Then let's finish this first trial."

Vanille fell back into the steady spanking rhythm again. Annie hooted and howled, but didn't beg or bargain any further.

As she watched from her uncomfortable seat in the timeout corner, Ruby the Roussette struggled to keep count, guessing that she could expect the same punishment, or worse, if she tried to make a break for it.

After administering no less than one-hundred spanks, Vanille paused. "All right, Miss Roza. That was for trying to run away and making a scene. If I set you down, do you think you can show a better display of self-control?"

Already, Annie's voice was a little tearful, but more from remorse than pain. "Oooh... Yes... ma'am... **sniff!**"

Vanille set Annie down on her feet and helped straighten her up, stroking Annie's head and patting her shoulder. "That's more like it. Now, Annie, I've never had a problem with you running away from a spanking before. Whatever got into you?"

Annie frowned, wiping away a couple tears with both hands, before she corrected her posture and tried to control her shaking voice. "I... I just panicked. I'd been watching you spank Ruby for so long, and all I could think about was how I was next."

As Ruby shifted on her stool, she felt one of the wooden spikes dig into her freshly spanked backside, and tensed at the fresh reminder. Ruby started to swallow a lump in her throat, but thanks to the thick, sudsy soap bar in her mouth, she hacked it right back up.

Ruby felt the soap bar nearly slip from her lips and bit down, not wanting to risk provoking Vanille any further at the moment. As Ruby saw Vanille and Annie's eyes on her, the bratty bat felt a little spittle of drool dripping down from the soap bar.

Vanille shook her head at Annie. "I understand you were scared, Annie. It's normal to be scared before a spanking. But you're also old enough to know better. I've seen you be brave and accept a punishment you had coming in the past. I hoped you could show Miss Ruby how to be obedient, and submit to chastisement with dignity, like a lady. Do you think you're setting a good example, so far?"

Annie hung her head, then shook it meekly. "No, ma'am."

"Well, do you want to try again?"

Annie looked up at Vanille, her eyes watery. "Yes, please."

Vanille beamed. "That's the spirit! In that case, fetch me the heavy wooden paddle. You know the one."

Annie hunched her shoulders, then turned stiffly to look at the wall of spanking implements behind her.

Ruby immediately guessed which paddle Vanille meant. It could only be the one with the long handle, with a series of seven emerald-shaped holes drilled into it. Annie retrieved it and held it out to Vanille, both of her hands trembling as she cradled the ferocious implement.

Vanille accepted the paddle, and smacked it experimentally against her own palm. The resulting *"Thwack"* was surprisingly audible, despite how gentle the gesture seemed. "Annie, I bared Miss Ruby's behind today for being disobedient during a spanking. I think it's only fair that you get the same treatment, for the same offense. But what do you think? Do you deserve a bare bottom spanking for how you behaved?"

Annie winced. She had once answered, "No," to a similar question. Vanille hadn't been angry, but she had also asked a few probing questions, until Annie had found herself agreeing with Vanille. In her heart, Annie knew the correct answer. "Yes, ma'am... are you going to bare my bottom now? ... Or do you want me to do it?"

"It's your choice, Annie."

Annie gripped the hem of her mini skirt. "I... I'd like to do it myself, please. I want to show you I can be more brave, this time."

Vanille nodded. “Very good. Then you know what to do.”

Annie took a shaky breath, then quickly dropped her panties, stepped out of them, and folded them neatly.

Vanille gestured to the high-backed chair with the paddle. “Set those down, then stand two feet in front of the chair.”

Wordlessly, Annie set her panties down beneath the chair, then rested her hands on either side of the seat, bending over to present her quivering bottom as a target.

As Vanille pulled a wooden clothespin from her pocket, she smiled, then neatly pinned up Annie’s skirt to reveal her bright pink bottom. “You read my mind! I see you remember our previous discussion in the woodshed, over that foolish matter with the Ring of Apricorn?”

Annie kept her eyes forward, focused on the beautiful, hand-carved headrest of the chair. “Yes, ma’am!”

“Then you should also recall what you promised me that day?”

“That I would never, ever play with dangerous magic ever again, and that I would stop to think before taking foolish risks.”

“And what about today? Do you think it was wise to go galavanting after Cosmic Gemstones alone, without telling anyone?”

“Um... I told Taylor? He made me the Cosmic Gemstone Locator!”

Vanille gave Annie’s bottom a soft tap with the paddle, at half strength. Nevertheless, Annie’s tail twitched as she felt the smack, and with dread she realized that even that light test swing had been more than enough to produce a fresh sting across her buttocks. Vanille glided the cool wood of the paddle across Annie’s bottom. “Taylor is still a child. You know better than that. Did you tell your parents?”

“Uh... no, Mrs. Vanille. I just... didn’t think to?”

As Vanille patted Annie’s bottom softly, Annie felt her upper torso rock forward slightly. She knew from experience that once the real paddling began, she would have to mentally “accept” every stroke of the paddle, and allow her body weight to roll with each stroke.

Vanille clicked her tongue. “Exactly. You didn’t think. Fighting with Ruby was silly. Attacking Berylin was cruel. But *not thinking* was the first of the series of bad decisions that brought you to this point. Do you have anything else to say for yourself?”

Annie lowered her forehead to the seat of the chair, with a groan. “No... I feel so stupid.”

Vanille lowered the paddle, circled around, and kneeled to Annie's eye level, "Annie, dear, you are *not* stupid. You acted foolishly. You can't fix stupid, but the good news is…"

Vanille stroked Annie's cheek, looking her in the eye. "… You *can* fix foolish. If you learn from this experience, I know you can do better in future. You can make good choices."

Annie's eyes shone. "Really? You don't think I'm an air-head, Mrs. Vanille?"

Vanille shook her head. "You are not an air-head. If I ever hear anyone call Annie Roza an air-head… I'll give them something to think about. I don't care who it is, including you, Annie. They'll get an instant trip to the woodshed. Which reminds me…"

Vanille strolled back to her position and rested the flat-surface of the paddle against Annie's backside. "Because you agreed to take responsibility, and help fix the damage you caused this week, I'm not giving you a full-length paddling. Think of this as your last warning. But because you also made several foolish choices today, I'm giving you three separate sets of strokes. You will get five paddle swats to remind you to think before you act…"

Vanille emphasized her words with a soft slap of the paddle. "Another five paddle swats for that absurd display of temper, fighting with Miss Ruby in the village center..."

Another slap, but firm enough to make the point clear. The real spanking was about to start. "And another *ten* strokes for attacking Berylin. And you will be apologizing to him as soon as we're finished here. I expect you to count each stroke... Oh! And remember to say thank you. And grit your teeth, so you don't bite your tongue by mistake. Are you ready?"

Annie swallowed, instantly feeling her guilt return, slamming down on her chest like a rock slide. "Yes, ma'am.... Thank you ma'am."

Ruby almost swooned. If twenty strokes with a paddle was considered a "warning shot," Ruby shuddered to think what a full paddling would be.

Vanille delivered the first proper stroke of the paddle, the impact easily flattening both of Annie's butt cheeks like two pancakes. Annie rocked several inches forward, then rolled back. Annie seethed, her jaw clenched tight. "Tsss! One, ma'am! ... Thank you, ma'am!"

Annie managed to keep in position and count the first five strokes without incident. On the sixth stroke, Annie yelped, then fidgeted as

she felt the rising heat, rubbing one of her boots against the back of her leg. “Agh... Six, ma’am... Thank you, ma’am!”

“Feet on the ground, Annie. Take a deep breath, and tell me when you’re ready. The next stroke is number seven.”

Annie whistled and stretched her legs. When Vanille tapped the paddle against Annie’s backside, she decided she’d better not dawdle. “Yes, ma’am... ready, ma’am.”

Vanille began the paddling anew. Annie’s yells were more pronounced this time. “Yeeow! ... Seven, ma’am!”

Vanille paused, then delivered a quick warning swat. “Remember to say ‘thank you.’”

Annie hissed, her teeth bared. “Th-thank you!”

Vanille’s ear perked at the absence of the word, “Ma’am” unsure if Annie meant it deliberately. Deciding to give Annie the benefit of the doubt, Vanille chose to ignore it, and delivered the eighth stroke.

Annie tried to hold in her scream, before it seemed to explode out of her mouth on its own. “Aaargh! Eight, ma’am! Thank you, ma’am!”

Pleased with Annie’s endurance, Vanille glanced up, and caught Ruby’s eye. Vanille was equally pleased to see Ruby sitting ramrod

straight on the punishment stool, closely watching every moment of the punishment. Vanille could read the look on Ruby's face like an open book. As Vanille delivered the ninth stroke of the paddle across Annie's behind, Ruby was thinking, *"... I'm next!"*

After stroke number ten, Annie remembered to count and say thank you. But after the eleventh swat...

"Yeeeaaaaiiiiieeee-heee! Teh-twelve, ma'am!"

"No, Annie. That was only eleven."

"Eleven! I meant eleven!"

Vanille raised an eyebrow and patted Annie's bottom a few times. Then Vanille strolled to Annie's other side, switching the paddle to her other hand. "Breathe in, breathe out, Annie... Now, I'm going to repeat that stroke. Try to count eleven again, and this time... mind your manners"

Annie nodded furiously, fighting to ignore the lingering ache of the previous strokes. Annie knew from experience that Vanille was willing to start over from the beginning if a naughty child was obstinate during a spanking. "Yes, ma'am!"

Wordlessly, Vanille delivered the extra stroke, and waited for Annie to catch her breath and count. "*Hwoo*... Eleven, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am."

Immediately after she finished saying thank you, Annie felt the twelfth stroke land, and she gasped. Annie lowered her head onto the seat, her knees close to buckling, before straightening and repeating her count.

Annie endured five more strokes with equal fortitude, but by stroke number eighteen, the cumulative effect of the paddling had taken its toll. Annie bellowed, and scrambled up onto the chair, clutching the back support like a long-lost friend, and grasping her flaming backside, feeling the heat through her white gloves.

Vanille didn't scream, but she did use her dreaded mom voice. "Annie! Get off the chair. Back in position. And no rubbing!"

Annie felt fresh tears spilling down her cheeks as she quickly climbed down and reassumed the position. "Yes, ma'am! Sorry, ma'am!"

"You're almost there. Take a moment to catch your breath, then finish your count."

Annie took a few shaky breaths, and felt her nose clogging from the tears. "Schniff! Eighteen, ma'am. Thank you ma'am."

Vanille pressed the paddle against Annie's bottom gently. Even without any force, Annie could feel the wooden surface trapping the radiant heat from her own backside against her like a furnace. "If you leave position again, or put your hands on your bottom, I'm adding extra swats. Grit your teeth, and tell me when you're ready."

Annie snorted, and felt her sinuses clear. "Yes, ma'am... ready, ma'am!"

Vanille administered the nineteenth stroke with such force, Annie had to catch herself to keep from getting knocked forward and out of position. But she was ready. Annie gagged, then squealed her count. "Agh! Nineteeeeen! Ma'am! Thank you, ma'am!"

The twentieth swat landed at a slightly upward angle, catching both of Annie's sit spots as it glided across her lower cheeks, and the welts left by the previous stroke. Annie screamed, her voice going hoarse. "Aaaaahaaaa! Twenty! Twenty, ma'am! Oh my, I'm sorry, I'm sorry! Thank you, ma'am!"

Vanille laid a hand on Annie's back. "There, there. You made it. That was a sound paddling, and all things considered, I'd say you took it well. You may stand up, Annie."

Annie moaned as she arched her back, grasping her bottom. "Oooh! My aching–"

Vanille clapped Annie's upper thigh. "Annie! Hands off your booty!"

Annie stood at attention, like a soldier. "Yes, ma'am! Sorry ma'am!"

Vanille tapped her foot as she looked Annie in the eye, her eyes narrow. "Will I need to give you another spanking, to remind you not to rub your bottom in timeout?"

Annie shook her head, quailing under Vanille's gaze. "No, ma'am! I'll remember, ma'am!"

Vanille held up the paddle, gesturing to point Annie toward the corner where Ruby was currently sitting. "Very good, Annie. In that case, I'll have you stand in timeout. No need to sit. I trust you'll resist the temptation to rub. Miss Ruby, you may leave your stool."

Flapping her bat wings, Ruby literally flew away from the punishment stool, before she came skipping to a halt. Vanille pulled the empty soap box out from her pocket, and popped the soap bar out of Ruby's mouth. Ruby spluttered slightly, before Vanille offered her a handkerchief. "Use this. You may keep it, so scrub out whatever you can reach for now."

Ruby mumbled something that could either have been a "Thank you," or something much ruder, before she stuffed the handkerchief

in her cheeks and scraped at the thin film of soap that now caked the entire inside of her mouth.

Vanille waited patiently until Ruby finally straightened up to look at her. Feeling embarrassed, Ruby reached to stuff the handkerchief in her back pocket, only to find that her leggings were still tugged down across her ankles, and felt even more embarrassed. Finally, Ruby stuffed the handkerchief into her bosom, and poked it down out of sight. "Ahem... I take it I'm getting a paddling, ma'am?"

Vanille nodded. "Yes, but first I want to make sure you understand why. You also went after the Cosmic Gemstones, on your own, just like Annie. You got into that absurd fight with her, and you attacked Berylin without provocation. I think you deserve the exact same number of strokes Annie got. But, have you anything to say in your defense?"

"Well, I wasn't going after the Cosmic Gemstones for no good reason. I've collected them before, for important clients."

"Oh, like Dr. Mechanik?"

Ruby was incensed. "Hey! I was never really working for Walrusman! I was a double agent for G.L.O."

Vanille nodded. “I see. I apologize for suggesting otherwise. I only heard about the Space Colony ARK incident after the fact. You’ll have to tell me the whole story sometime.”

Ruby relaxed slightly. She would have felt flattered, if not for the fact her exposed, aching ass acted as a constant reminder of her bruised ego. “Well... I will! I’m perfectly capable of protecting a Cosmic Gemstone. The President has trusted me with tracking them down in the past.”

“Just not in the present.”

Ruby shrugged. “... Not exactly, but the government has never expressly *forbidden* me from collecting the Cosmic Gemstones, either.”

“Has it occurred to you that some ideas are really bad ideas, regardless of what the Government does, or does not, tell you?”

Ruby looked around, and found no answers to this puzzler written on the walls of the woodshed. “Well, what’s so bad about me protecting the Cosmic Gemstones? Who better than an international jewel thief to keep a priceless gemstone safe?”

Vanille blinked. “You’re an international jewel thief?”

Ruby suddenly remembered the giant wall of spanking implements hanging right behind Vanille. "*Ex*-international-jewel thief! Former! Pardoned! Reformed! My point is... I can be trusted to keep a Cosmic Gemstone out of the wrong hands!"

Vanille hummed, her ears twitching. "Hmm... I agree. I think you're the perfect person to take responsibility for a Cosmic Gemstone. So, in that case, I'm willing to lighten your punishment. I will spare you five strokes of the paddle, on the condition that you promise to do whatever is necessary to keep the Cosmic Gemstones safe."

Standing in her corner, Annie peeped curiously over her shoulder.

Ruby's ears and wings trembled with joy. "Yes! Of course! I promise!"

Vanille smiled sweetly. "Excellent! In that case, why don't you show me those three Cosmic Gemstones you were waving around earlier?"

Ruby giggled as she stuffed her hand down her bosom and produced a suspiciously large briefcase. She popped it open to reveal three Cosmic Gemstones, held securely in place. "Oh, these babies? Quite a magnificent collection, isn't it?"

"Exactly. I don't think it's a good idea for any young woman to carry around *three out of seven* of the most powerful objects in the

universe. That's just asking for trouble. I said I thought you could be trusted to protect *a* Cosmic Gemstone. I'll find safe homes for the other two."

Ruby's smile froze as she put two and two together. "But... I found them! They were abandoned property. That means they belong to me!"

"But if we want to keep them from being used for evil, the safest thing to do is to store them at different locations. Didn't you just promise me that you were willing to do whatever it took to keep the Cosmic Gemstones out of the clutches of evil?"

"But I'm perfectly capable of doing that! Surely, if I can be trusted to keep one safe, I can just as easily keep three safe."

"Perhaps you could. But for now, I think I'm only willing to trust you with one Cosmic Gemstone."

Ruby gazed hungrily at the Cosmic Gemstones. "Can... can I take the extra paddling, instead? Wouldn't that prove how serious I am about keeping them—uh—keeping them *safe?*"

Vanille shook her head. "It's not about punishment. It's about trust. You can't change my mind by letting me spank you, any more than I can force you to change your mind by spanking you. You promised

me you wanted to protect the Emeralds. What do you think is the safest place for them?"

Ruby swallowed, her hand hesitating as she reached for each of the Cosmic Gemstones in turn, admiring their distinct colors. "Well... there have been quite a few Robo-Baddies tracking me recently. Could you keep... this one... safe for me?"

With an expression that made it clear she'd far rather endure a long spanking, Ruby held out the Emerald for Vanille, who scooped it up, and tucked it into the folds of her dress. "Of course. And the second one?"

Ruby took a trembling breath. "Vanille, I think you should let me keep these two. I have two, distinct, fool-proof plans to keep them secret, and keep them safe. Walrusman will never get his hands on them!"

Vanille shook her head. "And where are these two hiding spots?"

"I can't tell you. It's a secret. That's the whole point."

Vanille's nose twitched. "Are you trying to be funny?"

Ruby shook her head. "No. But if you don't trust me, then I won't argue. I'll just have to wait until I've earned your trust."

Ruby didn't hesitate as she took the second Cosmic Gemstone and handed it to Vanille. Vanille examined her reflection in the gem. "Annie told me about how you stood between her and danger during the first part of your silly little fight. I think you can be trusted to keep track of two gems."

Slowly, deliberately, Vanille handed the Cosmic Gemstone back to Ruby.

Ruby looked at the second Cosmic Gemstone with disbelief, before quickly returning it to the briefcase and stuffing it down her bra. "Yes! Trust! I love trusting people! We should all do trust falls after... after my spanking."

Vanille giggled, then held up the wooden paddle. "Oh dear, I'd almost forgotten. Well, Miss Ruby the Roussette, since you've shown a remarkable improvement in your attitude since your first spanking, I'm willing to let you off with fifteen strokes of the paddle. Does that sound fair to you, Annie? You got twenty after all."

Annie shook her head. "Yes, Mrs. Vanille. That makes sense. I don't want Ruby to get any more swats than she has to."

Vanille gestured to the chair. "Thak you for understanding, Annie. In that case, Miss Ruby, you may... assume the angle."

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Barney the Quokka swallowed as he got an eyeful of Ruby the Roussette's red bottom through the key hole. "Oh man, now Mrs. Vanille's gonna paddle the bratty bat girl!"

Honey the Squirrel shoved to take his spot at the key hole. "My turn!"

"Huh? Hold on, I just started my turn!"

Honey whistled as she watched Ruby bend over to assume the position for her paddling. "Buddy got to watch Annie's hand spanking, and you got to watch Annie's paddling. It's my turn. Isn't that right, Buddy?"

Buddy the Fox tensed as he overheard the tell-tale, echoing, *"WHOP!"* that announced the beginning of Ruby's paddling. "Uh... sounds fair to me..."

Barney scowled as he pressed his eye against the thin crack in the door. "Ugh! Why do you have to side with the girl?"

Buddy opened his mouth, but when he heard a second crack of the paddle, followed by Ruby's trailing cries, he shut his mouth with a snap.

Honey clicked her tongue as she watched intently through the keyhole, her hands folded neatly behind her back. “Tut, tut, you two. If you don’t hush, we’re sure to get caught!”

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Ruby howled, and clutched her bottom with both hands. She could practically feel the long, straight edged mark left by the paddle as it slowly rose across the flesh of her lower buttocks. *“Yeeeaaaiiiieeee!* Noooo! No more!”

Vanille placed one hand on the small of Ruby’s back, then slapped Ruby across the thighs with the paddle. “Hands down, Ruby. If you disobey again, I’m adding the five strokes back to your total.”

Ruby’s hands shook as she gripped her bottom tighter. “Yes, ma’am! I’ll obey ma’am.”

Vanille waited, but Ruby’s hands stayed firmly in place. “Brave words, Miss Ruby. But actions speak louder than words…” Vanille stroked the paddle gently along Ruby’s lower bottom, “Obey, now.”

With an effort, Ruby tore her hands away from her bottom, and gripped the seat. “Th-three, ma’am! Thank you, ma’am!”

As Ruby looked furtively over her shoulder, she saw Vanille shaking her head. “I know you can do better than that, Miss Ruby. That stroke doesn’t count.”

“B-but…”

Vanille tapped Ruby’s bottom with the paddle. “Would you prefer to start over from the beginning?”

“No, ma’am!”

“Then you’d do well to make an effort. Let’s try giving you something to help you concentrate. Grit your teeth, then repeat after me: ‘I have been a bad girl. And I deserve this spanking!’”

Ruby swallowed, then answered meekly. “… I’ve been a bad girl… And I deserve this spanking.”

Vanille landed a firm stroke of the paddle. “Now, count three.”

Ruby grimaced, then hissed. “Ssshh! … Three, ma’am. Thank you, ma’am.”

Vanille pressed the paddle gently against Ruby’s caboose, letting her feel the rising heat. “Every time you’re tempted to think about your poor little bottom, how badly it smarts, and how dearly you want the spanking to stop, instead, I want you to repeat those words to

yourself. Again. 'I have been a bad girl. And I deserve this spanking.'"

Ruby whined as she shuffled her feet, then mumbled the words as instructed. "Aaaaw... mmm... I'm a bad girl. And I deserve this spanking."

Ruby's eyes popped open as she felt the impact of the paddle, but she caught herself from being sent flying up and over the chair. "Yeeeoooowww! ... Four, ma'am... thank you, ma'am!"

Ruby and Vanille quickly fell into a steady pattern. After Ruby caught her breath, she would repeat the words from memory. The moment Ruby was finished, Vanille would deliver the next stroke. Ruby's voice gradually became more strained, and sometimes she mixed up the exact words, but the ritual had exactly the effect Vanille had hoped for. Before each and every spank, Ruby had time to mentally and physically prepare herself. Ruby endured the next six strokes without struggling, but by the eleventh she was reaching her limit. "Eeeeyaaiiiieeeee! Eeee... eleven, ma'am! Crap!"

Vanille used a quick flick of her wrist to snap the paddle across Ruby's sore behind. "I've warned you once about using the word 'Crap,' under my roof. The next time I hear it, you will receive an additional spanking, along with a mouth-washing."

Ruby flinched as she felt the warning tap, her knees knocking. “Yes, ma’am. Sorry, ma’am!”

Vanille rubbed soft circles across Ruby’s bottom with the paddle. “Good. Now, remember to say thank you. Then, when you’re ready, you know what to do.”

Ruby nodded as she caught her breath, and struggled to remember her words. “Yes, ma’am!... Thank you, ma’am! ... Phew... I’m a b-bad girl... and I need a spa-spanking...”

Ruby had a feeling she didn’t get the words exactly right, but Vanille was satisfied, and delivered the next stroke without further lecturing. Ruby counted the twelfth stroke, and remembered her thank you.

After two more strokes, Ruby gradually broke down into uncontrolled tears, gasping the words between racking sobs. Ruby trembled uncontrollably before she repeated her words, and accepted the fifteenth and final stroke. After the paddle landed, Ruby hopped in place, then sank to her knees. “Fuh-fifteen, ma’am! Thank you, ma’am!”

As she noticed she’d technically left her position, Ruby’s eyes popped open, and she twitched back up to grip the chair. “Sorry, ma’am!”

Vanille pressed the paddle against Ruby's backside. "Why do you say you're sorry?"

Ruby swallowed. "Be-because I flinched again."

"Do you need another spanking to remind you to hold still during a spanking?"

Two fresh tears spilled down Ruby's already wet cheeks as she twisted to look at Ruby. "I... I think I've been a bad girl. And I deserve to be spanked. Please, Mrs. Vanille, give me the five extra strokes you promised me."

Vanille raised an eyebrow. She hadn't planned on giving Ruby any additional strokes, if she could help it. "Oh? I'm quite satisfied that you've been thoroughly spanked. Are you sure?"

Ruby nodded, glancing at Annie in the corner. "I don't think it's fair that I get fewer strokes than Annie, for making the same mistake. I should have known better than to go hunting after Cosmic Gemstones alone, without clearance from HQ."

Vanille stroked Ruby's back, then secured her grip on Ruby's waist. "In that case, I propose I give you five quick swats, so you can get this over with. No need to repeat your words, or your count. Just take a deep breath, and tell me when you're ready."

Ruby exhaled, then steeled herself, gritting her teeth. “Ready, ma’am!”

Vanille popped the paddle across Ruby’s aching bottom five times, in quick succession. To Ruby’s displeasure, she noticed every swat still had plenty of weight behind it, but it was over so quick, it was as if her brain registered it as one, big, final spanking, rather than five.

Ruby seethed, her breath shaky. “… Thank you, ma’am!”

“You’re welcome, Miss Ruby. That was a heroic effort. Now…up you get. Annie? Come join us. Both of you, put your hands behind your head.”

Annie and Ruby obeyed, looking nervously askance at one another. They both felt the cool air keenly against their glowing, red-hot rears.

Vanille settled herself into the chair with a contented sigh. Vanille was so tall, that she was still at eye level with the other two when seated. “First, let’s discuss my expectations for the rest of the week. I don’t believe either of you are bad girls at heart. You’re both good girls, who made bad decisions. But there is still a price to pay for those decisions. This week, you will be doing plenty of chores around Floral Forest Village, starting with cleaning up the debris left by your… altercation. Do you agree that’s fair?”

Annie and Ruby both nodded. “Yes, ma’am.”

Vanille stood, towering over both of them. “Secondly, you will be guests in my home this week. I expect you to be polite, and set a good example for Crème and the other neighbor children... including the language you use.”

Vanille caught Ruby’s eye as she added the last phrase, pointedly. “As long as you are living under my roof, I will treat you with the same respect and consideration I owe to my own daughter. That includes administering discipline, when needed. Now, Annie dear, do you recall what kind of behavior earns you a bedtime spanking, in my home?”

Annie clutched the back of her head, her memory as just keen as the sting in her keister. “Yes, Mrs. Vanille. We get bedtime spankings for doing something dangerous. Anything that endangers ourselves, or others.”

Ruby looked befuddled. “A... bedtime spanking? How’s that different from any other spanking?”

Vanille’s ears flopped as she turned to look at Ruby. “It’s not all that different. A bedtime spanking is, as the name suggests, delivered immediately before bedtime. It’s meant to act as reinforcement. A keen reminder to take greater care of your one, precious life. For that

reason, I'll be giving you both a bedtime spanking tonight. Any objections?"

Annie and Ruby both shook their heads. Privately, Ruby was squirming at the thought of yet another spanking, but something about the sensation of a freshly spanked bottom reminded her to be polite. "No, ma'am!"

Vanille looked at Ruby with a wry smile, then turned her attention to Annie. "Very good. Now, Annie, both you and Ruby earned a bare-bottomed spanking today. Could you explain to Miss Ruby what kind of behavior merits a bare bottom?"

Annie inhaled sharply. "Yes, ma'am. Any deliberate disobedience, defiance, or disrespect equals a spankin' on our bare butts."

"Correct. Now, here is my dilemna… ordinarily, I insist that a bare bottom must remain fully bare until the spanking is finally over. The point is to give you a constant, sobering reminder of the penalty for willfulness. But since your bedtime spanking signals the final end of your punishment… That means this spanking isn't over yet. Do you understand what that means?"

Annie and Ruby's eyes nearly bugged out of their sockets. Ruby stammered. "You're… you're going to make us walk home… like this?"

Annie's lip trembled. "But... everyone will see our... uh, our booties! You'd never... I mean, you always say a spanking should be a private affair, if possible!"

Vanila tapped her foot. "Yes. If possible. The two of you already made quite a spectacle of yourselves in public. Perhaps I should make an exception, and let our neighbors see precisely what happens to naughty young ladies who start pointless fights..."

Annie and Ruby froze. They might have resembled statues, except for their quivering hindquarters.

Vanille looked down on them from on high, like a queen, before she finally cracked a buck-toothed smile. "On the other hand... the point of this spanking is to teach you girls humility, not degrade you. Seems I'll have to make an exception after all. For the sake of your modesty, I won't insist that your bottoms remain bare until the spanking is completely over... just this once. You may stay dressed, until it's time for your last spanking of the day, right before bedtime."

Tears of gratitude sprang to Annie and Ruby's eyes as they both stammered. "Yes'm! Thank you!"

Vanille held up a finger. "Hold on. Let's get one thing straight. You girls are on probation. If I have to deal with any more fighting, or obstinance, or foul language in public today, I won't hesitate to

spank you in public. The dignity of privacy is a privilege, not a right. Do I make myself clear?"

Annie bounced up and down on her heels. "Yes, Mrs. Vanille!"

Ruby's breasts heaved as she finally managed to exhale. "Clear as crystal...ma'am."

Vanille gestured to Ruby's leggings and Annie's panties. "In that case, why don't you two make yourselves decent? It's too late for morning tea, and we've missed lunch, but if we hurry, I think we'll have time for a snack and afternoon tea."

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Honey the Squirrel's red fur stood on end as she saw Annie and Ruby rush to get dressed. "Shoot! They're wrapping up! We've gotta get out of—"

Honey turned to find her mother standing right behind her...and neither of the boys. "Huh? Where did they–"

"Honey Catalina Squirrel, what on earth are you doing here, young lady?"

"Uh... I wanted to ask Mrs. Vanille something?"

“Oh? And what is that, precisely?”

Honey shifted on her feet, rubbing her hands together. “Well... you see...”

The door popped open behind Honey, and Mrs. Vanille towered over her. Annie and Ruby were smiling sweetly, but when they noticed Honey, their smiles were quickly replaced by looks of horror and rage.

Mrs. Squirrel crossed her arms. “Honey, even when you’re in trouble, you can still choose to tell the truth.”

Honey hung her head. “Sigh... Hello, Mrs. Vanille. I was gonna ask you how bad a spanking I should get for playing Peeping Tom on Annie and the bat lady getting spanked.”

Mrs. Vanille shook her head. “I see. That was quite a naughty trick to play on them. Why don’t you start by apologizing to Miss Annie and Miss Ruby?”

Honey squirmed as she tried to look them each in the eye in turn. “I’m sorry, Annie. Sorry, Miss... Battenrouge Lady.”

Ruby flashed her vampiric teeth. “Sorry? You think you can just say you’re sorry and we’ll just–”

Annie smiled softly. “I forgive you, Honey.”

Ruby rounded on Annie, then glanced at Vanille, and finally groaned. “Ugh… It’s okay, kid. I forgive you.”

Mrs. Squirrel huffed. “Hrmm! Thank you, young ladies. I promise you that Honey is going to be spanked, smartly and soundly, for snooping on you. Any recommendations, Mrs. Vanille?”

“Do you still have that wooden spoon I loaned you?”

Mrs. Squirrel produced the implement. “I was just on my way to return it to you. It worked such wonders on improving Honey’s attitude, I thought I wouldn’t need it anymore… but would you mind if I borrowed it for another week?”

“It’s no trouble at all. And, of course, feel free to make use of the shed.”

Mrs. Squirrel beamed as she scooped up a nervous-looking Honey. “I’ll take you up on that!”

Vanille put a hand on Annie and Ruby’s shoulder. “And never forget… even when you have to give a child a spanking, you must always do it with love!”

Mrs. Squirrel snorted, but at the sight of her nervous daughter, her expression softened somewhat. “You hear that, Honey? You have a spanking coming. But before we begin, I want you to know that I love you, even when you do something wrong.”

Honey sank into her mother’s embrace. “Yes, Mommy. I’m sorry I was bad. I’ll try to be brave for my spanking.”

Mrs. Squirrel kissed Honey on the forehead. “Good girl. Now, if you’ll excuse us…”

Honey and Mrs. Squirrel disappeared behind the woodshed door.

Vanille cradled her cheek against her palm. “Poor little dear. I hope she learns from this ordeal. Come along, ladies. Let’s give them some privacy.”

Ruby grumbled as she marched along behind Vanille. “More courtesy than she gave us.”

Vanille gave Ruby a very particular sort of look. Somehow, it reminded Ruby of the deep, lingering sting across her very sore bottom. “… As we should. Always be patient with children, when they err.”

As they left the woodshed behind, they could make out the tell-tale, musical sound of a wooden spoon smacking against a certain

squirrel girl's backside, followed by Honey's plaintive cries. But the noise quickly faded behind them as they approached Vanille's cottage.

The front door creaked open, slightly ajar. Crème the Hare peeped from behind it, Saucer the Cosmo nuzzled on top of her head. "Mommy? Are you all done spanking Miss Annie and Miss Ruby?"

"For now. They're both getting a bedtime spanking. But they also did a good job accepting their punishment, so we'll say no more about it. Crème, Saucer, would you two be my little helpers, please? Put on a kettle of water for tea. I'll make sandwiches."

Crème twirled a pirouette. "Oh! Afternoon tea on the porch? And it's such a perfect day for it, too!"

Saucer the Cosmo chirped, in his distinctive Cosmo language. "Chi, chi!"

After Crème and Saucer dashed away, Vanille turned to her other two charges. "Miss Annie, would you clean away what's left from this morning's tea? Miss Ruby, why don't you set out another two chairs."

Annie smiled. Even with the knowledge that she still had a spanking coming later, Annie finally felt like she was being restored to the

status of being a good girl in Vanille's eyes. "We're happy to help, Mrs. Vanille!"

Ruby shrugged. "... Chairs? Uh, will Annie and I really need 'em? I might prefer to stand."

Vanille clicked her tongue, but without a hint of her earlier disapproval. "Tsk, tsk! If you do that, everyone will know at once the reason why. There are two downy cushions on the couch. They should make sitting down a little more comfortable. Now, if you'll excuse me..."

Vanille sang a sweet tune as she made her way to the kitchen, and prepared sandwiches. After a long, disastrous morning, she would finally have a moment to enjoy a relaxing cup of red vanilla tea.

Ruby felt her bottom twinge slightly as she fetched the chair and set it by the patio table. Then settled herself experimentally onto the feathery cushion. "Hmm... this isn't too bad."

Annie frowned as she balanced a plate and silverware on each arm. "I could use some help, ya know."

Ruby groaned as she tried to stand up. "Yeah, yeah, sure."

As Ruby stood, she rocked the chair back, and accidentally jabbed Annie's foot with a leg of the chair.

Annie squealed and jumped like a rabbit, dropping all the dishes and cutlery as she bounced on one foot. "Yow! Watch it, you clutz!"

Ruby rocked dangerously on the chair as she pulled up her legs to avoid the falling forks and plates. Unfortunately, this meant she rested all her weight on her smarting backside, which not even the cushion could cushion. *"Yeeeee!*—You watch it, prickle-puss! You nearly skewered my foot with a fork!"

Annie rolled her eyes as she gestured to her injured foot. "Oh, I *nearly* skewered your foot? Look what you *actually* did to my foot!"

"Well, them's the breaks, pretty pinky princess."

Annie jabbed a finger in Ruby's bosom. "Batt butt!"

Ruby's boobies jiggled with pure, unbridled fury. "Panty-shot!"

"Vamp tramp!"

Vanille appeared at the door. "Girls? Did something break? I heard a–"

*CRASH!*

Annie Roza and Ruby the Roussette tackled each other, at precisely the same time, knocking over the patio table. Forks and spoons went flying as they grappled, and both snatched up a plate to use as a weapon of opportunity. Both girls smashed a plate over the other's head at precisely the same time, then howled as they clutched their skills.

Vanille held up her hands. "Girls! Stop this awful fighting! At once!"

Annie and Ruby dove at each other, kicking, biting, and scratching, knocking the patio table down the stairs, before they both rolled off the porch...and right into Mrs. Vanille's prize winning rose bushes.

As the thorns jabbed them on all sides, Annie and Ruby hopped into the air, before flopping right back down onto the jagged thorns, bottoms first.

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Honey sniffled as she returned her mother's hug. "Thank you for spanking me, Mommy. I won't do it again."

"I hope so, Honey. You are forgiven." After a final squeeze, Mrs. Squirrel helped Honey dry her eyes, and they both marched out of the woodshed.

The moment they stepped out, they were greeted by a strange sight. A crowd had gathered in front of Vanille and Crème's cottage. As Honey and her mother approached, and nudged past their neighbors, they spotted Vanille and Crème first. Vanille was seated on the front porch, while Crème stood to the side holding a first aid kit tight to her chest.

Honey looked around at her gathered neighbors, before spotting Barney and Buddy. "Huh? What's all this about?"

Barney sniggered. "See for yourself!"

Then Honey finally noticed. There were two, young ladies, both bent sharply across Vanille's lap. Annie Roza and Ruby the Roussette's beet-red faces were resting low to the ground, their weight supported on their elbows, while their beet-red backsides were poking high in the air behind them.

Honey's first thought was that Vanille was delivering yet another spanking, but then she noticed Vanille carefully examining the girl's bottoms, holding a magnifying glass in one hand, and a pair of tweezers in the other. "Ah, here's another one... Hold still, Little Miss *Rudey.*"

Vanille put a hint of extra emphasis on the last word as she mispronounced Ruby's name. Then Vanille pinched a thorn in Ruby's backside, and pulled it free with a soft, *"Ploink!"*

Ruby howled. “Yow! Not so rough!”

“Don’t be absurd, Miss Ruby. It has to be a quick, clean tug, or there’s no point. Annie, you’ve got a few more. Steady now…”

Annie squealed as she felt the pinch, her bottom quivering as a thorn was pulled free. “Eeee! I’m sorry, Mrs. Vanille!”

“Of course you’re sorry *now*, Annie, dear. But you weren’t sorry enough to amend your behavior. Now all that’s left is to endure til the end. Vanille, hand me the iodine. I want to sterilize these pin pricks.”

Ruby scrunched her mouth. “Iodine? But that’s going to sting like mad!”

Vanille shook her head. “We can’t risk you getting an infection, Miss Ruby. The iodine may burn and sting, but I think that’s the least of your worries. Think of it as a warm up for… well, for the *next* warm up.”

With that, Vanille doused a white cloth with iodine and began to apply it to Ruby’s backside. Ruby sucked in a sharp breath, and hissed. Vanille applied a second dose, leaving Ruby’s entire bare behind damp and glistening. Honey could have sworn she heard a faint sizzling sound as the iodine took its toll.

Knowing she was next, Annie's wriggled as she saw Vanille prepare a second cloth. "Mrs. Vanille, please... can't we do this inside? Eep!"

Vanille shook her head as she applied the iodine to Annie's bottom. "That ship has sailed, Miss Roza. I'm nipping this behavior in the bud..."

Vanille planted a firm slap on both the girl's bottoms, first Annie, then Ruby. "Or, rather, I'm nipping it in the *butt!* I think that's the last of the thorns... Finally, we may bring this matter to a close."

Buddy raised his hand. "Aren't you going to, uh, spank them?"

Vanille narrowed her eyes. "Don't be dense. *Of course* I am going to spank them. But why are you so interested, young man?"

Buddy fumbled with his glasses. "Just curious."

Vanille spun around on her chair, adjusting the angle so that Annie and Ruby's backsides were on full display for the gathered crowd. "Well, I won't keep you curious for long. These two young ladies have behaved very poorly today. And now they're going to serve as an example of exactly what happens to naughty little girls. I had already planned to give them a good smacking, and bring them by to each of your houses later this week to apologize. But since practically everyone in Floral Forest Village is here now, we might as well get

started making things right. These two are getting a long, hard, and long-overdue spanking, right now. Annie, Ruby, what do you have to say to everyone?"

Annie and Ruby shouted, with desperation in their voices. "We're sorry! We're sorry!"

Vanille landed two crisp claps, one across each bare bottom. "Are you really sorry? I'm not quite sure I believe you. Be more convincing." Vanille began to deliver steady spanks to both girls' bottoms, in a steady one-two-one-two pattern. Annie and Ruby wailed and spluttered out a variety of pleas and promises, along with a mix of sorrows and supplications.

But Vanille only carried on the slow, steady spanking, building the pace gradually. Once both girls noticed the punishment was not pausing for further lecturing, they quickly broke down into fresh cries of anguish. By then, Vanille had built the rhythm of the spanking to a furious, lightning-fast pace.

When Vanille finished, both girls were weeping softly, and the crowd watched with a mix of sympathy, terror, stunned approval, and a hint of amusement on the gathered faces. Vanille took a deep breath. "Stand up, girls. Hands behind your heads."

The moment Annie and Ruby rose to their feet, wincing, Vanille pinched them both by the ear and whispered so only they could

hear. “Now, you girls have both made an ass of yourself today, but you can start to make things right, starting right now. Turn around and look these folks in the eye. That way, when you say you’re sorry, they’ll know you really mean it.”

Annie and Ruby blushed furiously as they glanced down at their naked waists. Ruby swallowed, a bead of sweat trickling down her forehead and she glanced at the crowd behind her. “But, we’re not… you know… wearing anything, down there!”

Vanille shrugged. “And what of it? The boys don’t seem to mind.”

Ruby grimaced, then slowly turned to face the crowd. Pleased, Vanille released her hold on Ruby’s ear, then turned her attention to Annie. But Annie forgot to keep her hands behind her head, and thrust her hands forward to cover herself. “Please, Mrs. Vanille! Not this! *Anything* but this!”

Vanille shook her head as she looked Annie in the eyes, before pulling Annie’s hands up and folding them behind her head. “Annie, I love you like my own daughter. And that’s why I have to hold you accountable. It’s time to face the music.”

Annie’s lip trembled, as she nodded. “… Yes, mommy… muh-ma’am! I love you. I’m sorry you have to spank me!”

Vanille gently stroked the bottom of Annie's chin. "I forgive you, Annie. Now turn around and tell everyone what you have to say."

With a shuddering breath, Annie turned to face the crowd. In the end, Annie and Ruby ended up recounting the whole, sordid tale of their misadventures. A few curious children in the crowd kept raising their hands, hungry for more details of the spankings in the woodshed.

Once Annie and Ruby had finished making their pleas for forgiveness, they were surprised when the gathered crowd clapped softly for them.

Vanille appeared behind them, wrapping an arm to support each of them by the shoulder. "That was a beautiful apology, girls. We're almost finished. Starting tomorrow, these two will be doing clean up around Floral Forest village, to pay for the damage they did. If you can think of any chores that need doing, don't hesitate to ask. If you catch them slacking off, or if they give you any trouble... just let me know. Annie, Ruby, if I don't hear good reports this week, you'll spend the last day of your community service getting spanked from dawn til dusk, right over there, in the community square. Understood?"

Annie and Ruby glanced nervously at the spot, and noticed a wooden platform meant for local gatherings and village events. At the moment, it was strangely reminiscent of a gallows.

After promising to do their best, both girls were instructed to turn and kneel on the wooden steps to Vanille's cottage, fully naked. This meant Vanille's porch practically provided a picture frame, perfectly presenting the two poor, punished posteriors to public ponderance.

After dismissing the crowd, politely, Vanille began to set up the table and chairs, which had been knocked off the porch in the tussle. In the end, she settled on putting them on the sidewalk, right in front of her porch, so that she could keep a close eye on Annie and Ruby.

As the crowd started to disperse, Honey the squirrel sighed, and pinched Barney and Buddy. "Well, look who it is. My two favorite chickens."

The boys stiffened, then turned to face Honey, looking ashamed. Buddy cleaned his glasses. "Sorry we ran out on you, Honey."

Barney was looking at the clouds, before Buddy elbowed him to get his attention. Barney cleared his throat. "Yeah, you didn't deserve that."

Honey held up a hand. "Yes I did. And no worries, I didn't rat you out. Did I miss anything?"

Barney grinned. “You only missed a bit at the beginning. They fell into the rose bush and got every square inch of their booties covered in thorns.”

“Sounds hilarious. I’m sorry I didn’t get to see it.”

Buddy glanced around, then pulled the flip phone from his pocket. “Well, what if there was a way you could… watch it all over from the beginning?”

Honey grinned. Buddy’s phone was the latest model. It had an *actual* camera, which could record *actual* video, in glorious 240 pixel resolution. The three friends chuckled, as they rushed to find a secluded spot to watch the video all over from the beginning.

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As Crème stepped out of the front door, holding the tea kettle, she glanced down at Annie and Ruby, still kneeling on the steps for their timeout. Then Crème shuffled past them to reach the bottom of the stairs. “Mother? Have you forgiven Miss Annie and Miss Ruby yet? Oh, please, allow me to serve you.”

Vanille smiled as Crème poured her a cup of tea. “Why thank you, dear. You’re such a considerate host. And yes, I have forgiven them.”

Crème leaned in close to whisper behind her hand. “In that case… would you like me to invite them to join us for our tea party?”

Vanille stroked her chin, as she took in the sight of the two condemned lasses’ well-spanked asses. Annie and Ruby sensed they were becoming a center of interest, and stiffened, wondering if more spanking might be coming.

Vanille patted Crème on the head, and gestured to the cushioned seat next to her. “I think those two still need a little time to think about their behavior, and reflect on what they need to do to make things right. Why don’t we have a quiet tea time together today? Just me, and you?”

“And Saucer an’ Choco? And Mr. Berylin?”

“It wouldn’t be a tea party without their company.”

“I’ll go invite them right away!”

Crème paused at the door, then turned to look at Annie and Ruby’s sorrowful faces. “Um, Mommy, are you sure you’re not still mad at them?”

Vanille took a dainty sip of tea. She took a long, satisfied glance at both Annie Roza’s and Ruby the Roussette’s bright red rears. “How

can I possibly stay mad at them? After all, the poor dears still have a bedtime spanking coming tonight!"

That afternoon, Vanille and Crème enjoyed a delightful tea party with Saucer and Choco. It was the most relaxing tea time Vanille could remember having in years!

End of Chapter III

## Chapter IV: Manners Maketh Mobians

Crème the Hare elegantly filled a tea cup with hot water. "Would you care for a cup of tea, Mr. Berylin?"

Berylin's glass eyes flickered. "Does not compute. 'Tea' is defined as a beverage consisting of hot water, poured over cured or fresh leaves, and allowed to steep. Yet I possess no apparatus for the consumption of liquid beverages. And although my outer shell is constructed to make me fully waterproof up to a depth of 1,000 fathoms, my internal electronic systems could suffer damage from direct exposure to liquid, and pose a threat of electrical fire to others."

Crème sighed. "Oh my, I certainly don't want that, but... wouldn't it be fun to *pretend* to have a lovely cup of tea?"

Berylin's eyes shone. "Processing... Miss Crème spends a statistically significant length of her unstructured free time playing a game in which she pretends to host 'Delightful_Tea_Parties,' with various stuffed animals designated as 'Party_Guests.' Hypothesis: You wish me to play the game designated as Delightful Tea Party... with you?"

Mrs. Vanille, giggled warmly. "Well, we were rather hoping to have a *real* delightful tea party with you, Mr. Berylin, because *you* are a delight. But if you only pretend to drink the tea, I promise we won't be offended."

“Acknowledged. In that case…” Berylin’s eyes flashed, and his voice suddenly became less robotic. “Thank you for inviting me, Miss Crème, and Mrs. Vanille. I would be honored to have tea with you.”

Berylin held up the tea cup, which contained only steamed water, and made a whirring sound, as if sipping. “Contended sigh. This tea is simply delicious.”

Mrs. Vanille glanced around, taking in all the delightful sights and sounds of a perfect late-summer afternoon in Floral Forest Village…

…Well, all except for the unsightly debris left by the tumultuous battle in the forest this morning. Vanille sighed and turned to find the two-trouble makers right where she’d left them.

Sure enough, Annie Roza and Ruby the Roussette were still kneeling on their knees for timeout, their hands behind their heads, and their bar, bright-red bare bottoms on display for all the world to see. Annie and Ruby’s damaged outfits had been folded neatly on the top stairs, waiting teasingly for the two naked miscreants to be released. Vanille clicked her tongue. “Which reminds me… Mr. Berylin, are you suffering any injuries from the altercation this morning?”

Berylin shook his head on a swivel. “All internal systems are fully operational. Primary battery power at 20.04%. Emergency battery

power at 100%. External armor has suffered impact damage in several places. Recommendations: 1. Allow full recharge of internal battery. 2. Replace dented back plate armor to restore full defensive integrity. 3. Optional: request friend designated 'Kyrie_Taylor_Metre' to buff out superficial scratches and dings, and provide a new paint job."

Mrs. Vanille looked deep into Berylin's eyes. "You're not going to try and badger Taylor into giving you those absurd hot-rod flames again, are you?"

Berylin pretended to take another dainty sip of tea. "Accessing memory. Did we not previously agree it was my decision to purchase a custom paint job, on condition that I pay for it from my own finances?"

Mrs. Vanille sighed. "Yes, Berylin. It is your decision. I'm sorry for pestering you."

Berylin nodded. "Thank you, Mrs. Vanille. Upon reflection, I decided that I do not need custom hot-rod flames to test the status of my free-will sub routines. A superficial paint job bears no logical relation to my desire to be 'more cool' and 'an individual.' Rather..." Berylin stood, and raised his fist, his eyes blazing with righteous fire. "I shall rededicate myself to my chosen primary mission: to defend all life on earth, and stand against the evil forces of Dr. Walrusman!"

Vanille patted Berylin's back. "I think that's an admirable decision, Berylin."

Crème hugged his chest. "And whenever you need a rest from fighting, please remember, you always have a home here, with our family!"

A drop of lubricant leaked from Berylin's eye. "Yes, Miss Crème... home... family... Thank you both for helping me comprehend these concepts more fully."

Vanille surreptitiously handed Berylin a handkerchief so he could dry his eyes. Then she started to clean up the remains of afternoon tea. "You're welcome, Berylin. And thank you for defending the Cosmic Gemstone this morning. Your efforts were heroic."

"I am conflicted with my own programming. Though I refrained from using lethal force, my actions nevertheless caused damage to Floral Forest, and created additional risk of harm to the village residents."

Vanille patted Berylin on the head. "Then learn from your experience, and try to be more careful next time. But the fact remains: you didn't start that fight."

"Acknowledged. Nevertheless, I wish to have words with Miss Roza and Miss Ruby."

Vanille raised an eyebrow, then gestured to the front porch. “Of course.”

Berylin marched to face Annie Roza and Ruby the Roussette. Neither of them dared to leave their kneeling position in timeout, but both shivered as they saw the silhouette of Berylin’s shadow hovering over them. “Miss Annie Roza the Needle-mouse and Miss Ruby the Roussette! I wish to apologize for misidentifying you as enemy combatants. I hope that the battle has not left you with any irreparable damage. By my calculations, approximately 2% of the total damage to your lower-posteriors was caused by one of my energy blasts.”

At that precise moment, Annie and Ruby’s rear ends sure *felt* like they’d suffered irreparable damage, but after the spanking from Vanille, the fight with Berylin had been almost forgotten. Annie twisted to look up at Berylin, looking shame-faced. “Please, don’t apologize, Mr. Berylin. We were the only ones in the wrong, not you. I’m ashamed of how I acted. I knew you were Crème’s friend, but I was so obsessed with the Cosmic Gemstone… I completely forgot myself.”

Ruby glanced down at her aching buttocks, grimacing. “Yeah… I should have guessed you weren’t a Robo-Baddie, right from the start. And attacking you while your guard was down was

unforgivable on my part. Next time I go for your Cosmic Gemstone, I promise to never use those cheap tactics again."

Vanille cleared her throat, and tapped her foot, glaring at Ruby. "Ahem! *Next time*, Miss Ruby?"

Ruby tensed. "Oh... and I promise there won't be a next time... I don't think my poor bum could take it."

"That's more like it. Now..." Vanille tapped Annie and Ruby on the shoulder, each in turn. "Why don't both of you stand and look Mr. Berylin in the eye, so you can apologize properly? You are released from timeout, so no need to keep your hands on your head."

Sheepishly, Annie and Ruby covered their fronts as they turned around. Painfully aware of her missing clothing, Annie whimpered, then whispered. "I'm so sorry, Mr. Berylin."

Ruby groaned, before finally tearing her eyes away from her folded clothing. "Yeah, me too. Why don't we all just forgive and forget? And then we can get dressed!"

Vanille pinched Ruby's ear before she could turn away to snatch up her outfit. "Why don't we wait to hear what Mr. Berylin has to say first? Your laundry can wait."

Berylin bowed low at the waist. “Thank you. I forgive you both. Currently deleting all data classifying you as potential enemies... Deleted.”

Immediately, Berylin’s eyes flashed red, and a panel opened on his metallic gauntlet to reveal a rocket. Wondering if they were about to be challenged to a battle royale while wearing their birthday suits, Annie and Ruby tensed, their fur standing on end. Crème clutched tight to Vanille’s skirt. Vanille only raised an eyebrow.

But Berylin only pointed his armed-rocket-armed arm toward the horizon. “Alert! Robots bearing the insignia of the Walrusman Empire have been spotted approaching Cocoa Island! Innocent lives are in peril! Mrs. Vanille, with your permission, may I be excused from our family dinner, so that I may join the battle against the evil forces of Dr. Mechanik?”

Vanille smiled, casually waving a hand. “Of course, Mr. Berylin. You are excused. Hurry along!”

With a hiss of flame and steam, Berylin activated the rocket propulsors in his metallic boots, and flew into the air and across the horizon. Vanille sighed as she watched him disappear. “Such a responsible young man.”

Vanille beamed, then nodded to Annie and Ruby’s folded outfits. “Annie, Ruby, that was a beautiful apology you offered to Mr.

Berylin. Now, as for these outfits, I'm afraid they're too damaged to do you girls much good. If I can find my sewing machine, I'll try to salvage them. We'll find you both some appropriate clothing soon enough. But for now... please carry your outfits to the laundry room, so I can give them a good wash."

Annie and Ruby blushed madly as they collected their clothing, before following Vanille into the Hare-family cottage. They both whined a bit before placing their clothes in the washing machine, but the lingering soreness from their last spanking discouraged any argument.

Vanille clapped her hands, as if she was dusting her gloves off. "That will do! Now, all that's left is to find you girls something fitting to wear for supper... But first, I want to review your situation. Think of this as a meeting with your parole officer, if you will."

Annie and Ruby stood at attention, both painfully aware that they were still bare-booty-butt-naked.

There was no mistaking the authoritative quality in Vanille's voice. "I have forgiven you for the fight you started this morning, and for misbehaving during your spankings. However, I did warn you that the rule in this house is, when a naughty child earns a bare-bottom spanking, the bottom shall remain fully bare until the punishment is over. Therefore, since you still have a bedtime spanking coming tonight... I see no point in allowing you to hide those naughty little

bottoms of yours. No sense covering them up, just to go through the whole process of uncovering them all over again, right before bed."

Ruby sucked in a sharp breath. "But... you said we could get dressed in the woodshed!"

"Yes. That was because I didn't want to add any needless humiliation to your situation. But then you girls managed to start a second fight, crush my prize-winning rose bushes under your booties, and embarrass yourselves in front of all our neighbors. So now I think an extra serving of humble pie is in order."

Annie went pale. "You're not... gonna make us go out there... without our outfits? Oh, please, please, I'd just die if I'm caught in public without my Hunny the Neko designer dress!"

"Well, what's *left* of your Hunny the Neko designer dress will need at least a few stitches if you don't want it to fall off in public anyway. But not to fear, I'm sure I have some old dresses that you can wear tomorrow... but as for tonight..."

Vanille reached into a laundry basket, and pulled out two aprons. "You're going to start community service by helping me prep for dinner. We're having company tomorrow, so we have to get baking! You'll both need an apron."

Annie felt a cold bead of sweat on her brow. "Company!??"

Ruby gnashed her vampiric canine teeth as she held the apron lightly against her chest, as if she couldn't make up her mind whether she wanted it or not. "Apron?!?"

Annie suddenly registered the apron in her hands.

Ruby's apron was decorated with a logo for the Sonar drive-through chain, and the words, "National Chilli Dog Cook-Off Champion: 2002." Annie's apron had a radical 1990's logo and the words "Official Volunteer Cook of the Cosmix Detective Agency."

Both aprons looked well-loved, and probably had been washed at least a thousand times.

Vanille beamed as she pulled out a third apron, decorated with the simple slogan, "Kiss the Cook." "That's right! Some of my old friends from my Freedom Fighter days are having a reunion, and cousin Bonnie asked me to host! You're lucky you got in trouble today, so we have time to get you proper dresses. Just imagine if you had to spend all day tomorrow, dressed in your birthday suits, in front of everyone!"

Annie's knees wobbled. "Everyone? ... Wait, the old Freedom Fighters? You mean..." Annie almost swooned. "*Sonar...* will be *here?*"

“Assuming he doesn’t skip out at the last moment. That young man needs to slow down, and buy a calendar. Oh, and not just the old Freedom Fighters. I wasn’t even a full-fledged Freedom Fighter myself. All I did was volunteer in the kitchens, but Bonnie was nice enough to invite me, along with a few new friends we’ve made over the years. Mr. Metre, of course...and Mr. Duster!”

As Ruby finished tying her apron, her eyes went wide. The two zeros in “2002” perfectly framed her massive boobs like two donuts. “Mr. Duster? ... The Spiny-mole?”

“Yes! Crème convinced him that he needs to get off his flying island once in a while. He’s such a stoic young man.”

In a daze, Annie started to tie her apron. As she glanced back in horror, she realized her bare, spanked bottom was still a cheerful cherry red. “But... you can’t let Sonar see me like this! It’s too cruel!”

Vanille looked surprised, then patted them both on the shoulder. “Oh, Annie dear! Not to worry! I’d never dream of making you serve dinner half-naked... I promise you, we’ll have a perfectly modest outfit ready for both of you, before tomorrow. No one outside the family will be getting a gander at these wittle cutie booties...”

Vanille patted them both gently, across their sore behinds. “Well, assuming you girls aren’t naughty enough to earn a trip across my knee while we still have company. But I’m sure you will both be on

your best behavior! Now, trot along to the kitchen! I'm going to teach you how to make an upside-down carrot cake!"

Annie Roza and Ruby the Roussette spent the rest of their afternoon in the kitchen. After getting a glimpse of Vanille's impressive collection of wooden spoons, spatulas, and bread paddles, both were determined to be as helpful as possible.

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"That's good, Annie, use the knife to separate the cake from the pan... Now, the trick is to flip it in one smooth motion... *whoops!*"

As Annie attempted to flip the carrot upside-down cake, her wrist wobbled at the last moment, and the cake flopped off the edge of the serving plate. "Oh no! I'm sorry, Mrs. Vanille! Please, don't spank me!"

Vanille patted Annie's head. "There, there, Annie, I'm not going to spank you just for flubbing a cake flip. This is why we practice, after all. Ruby, dear, have you checked your cake recently? It must be done by now."

Ruby was leaning against the wall across from the oven, crossing her arms while wearing two pink, floral oven mitts. "Sheesh, whaddaya want from me? I put on the timer! It's not like it's going to catch fire if I take my eyes off it for one–"

Ruby froze as a wispy trail of smoke tickled her nose, before the fire alarm went off. Ruby threw open the oven door. Choking past a cloud of black smoke, she retrieved the flaming inferno that represented her cake.

Vanille held up a hand to shield Annie. “Careful! Clear the way!”

As Ruby slammed down the charred remains of her cake, wheezing, Vanille shut off the oven, and Annie activated the fan above the stove countertop. Ruby hacked up a puff of smoke, her voice gravely. “Ouf! What’s wrong with your stupid oven? Why didn’t the timer go off?”

Vanille opened a window to wave out the last of the smoke. “The oven isn’t stupid, Miss Ruby… See? You set the duration for the timer, but forgot to actually press start.”

Ruby clenched her oven mitts in unbridled fury. “Start button? Why should I have to press a start button to… start a timer…” Ruby trailed off at the sight of Ruby towering over her, and felt a chill run up and down her spine, and right through her recently-spanked buttocks. “… I… I’m sorry, Mrs. Vanille. Please don’t spank me again!”

Vanille’s face was stern. “Oh? Do you perhaps have a guilty conscience? What makes you think you have a spanking coming?”

Ruby eyed the ashy remains of her work. “Uh, for burning the cake? But I’ll make a new one! A better one!”

Vanille shook her head. “I wouldn’t have to spank you if this was just a matter of making a simple mistake.”

Ruby’s ears twitched, and her face sank. “You *have* to spank me? So that means…”

Vanille casually pulled on a second pair of thick oven mitts, then spun Ruby around. “Turn around, and bend over. Here, rest your hands on my arm for support. Now, stand on your tippie toes… Good, just like that!”

Ruby wobbled as she tried to maintain the precarious pose. “Huh? What is this? I can’t hold this silly pose!”

“Silly? Yes, that’s exactly the right word. You *should* feel silly right at this moment. Now stick that silly little bottom out for me. Try to arch your back a little.”

“But what’s this for? Aren’t you just gonna spank–”

Ruby tensed as Vanille clapped her oven mitt sharply across Ruby’s bottom. “This isn’t just an ordinary spanking. It’s also an exercise in attentiveness. Pay attention, and I promise it will go easier for you,

Miss Ruby. Keep your head held high, and try to imagine that, instead of serving me up the cake you were responsible for baking, you're instead serving up that sassy little bottom of yours, on a silver platter."

Ruby grimaced, but remembering her recent ordeal in the woodshed, she lifted her head high and arched her back to present her bottom as an easy target to Vanille. Ruby's concentration was broken by the sound of a girlish giggle. Ruby twisted to find Annie Roza stifling her laughter behind her hand. "Huh? Hey! This isn't fun–"

Vanille cut off Ruby's complaints with a second slap of the oven mitt. The soft material cushioned some of the force of the impact, but the rubber grips on the oven mit more than made up for that by adding just a hint of extra friction to the spank. Ruby felt all her previous welts, all painful mementos of her encounter with both the tawse and the paddle, flare to life. Ruby's voice warbled as she wailed, *"Waalaahooo!"*

Vanille raised her oven mitt high. "See? You can maintain concentration just fine, when you have the proper motivation. Now, think more carefully. What did you do wrong?"

"I'm sorry I burned the cake!"

Vanille answered with a firm whap, that successfully elicited a fresh cry from Ruby. “I’m not mad at you for burning the cake. I want you to think about what you did that caused you to burn the cake? What led up to that moment?”

Ruby’s knees wobbled as she strained to maintain her position. “I’m sorry I forgot to start the timer!”

Vanille delivered another solid swat. “That was a mistake, but I wouldn’t be spanking you for such a simple mistake. It was partially my fault for not explaining how to start the timer. But after you started the oven, what did you do then?”

“I... I just zoned out and waited for it to go off!”

This time, Vanille only patted Ruby’s bottom playfully. “That’s exactly right. But what I asked you to do was watch your cake, and pay attention. If you had done that, you’d have noticed it was done long before it scorched. So, with that in mind, do you understand now why you deserve to get this spanking, Miss Ruby?”

Ruby nodded furiously, sticking out her bottom in a valiant effort to demonstrate her obedient submissiveness, and maybe stop the spanking early. “Yes, ma’am! I didn’t pay attention to my assignment!”

Vanille landed a sound spank, no longer wearing kid gloves, though still wearing the terrible oven mit. “Exactly. And there was one more thing you forgot to watch, that might have kept you out of trouble. Does anything else occur to you?”

Ruby bit her lip, gripping tight to Vannila’s arm. “Uh... I forgot to watch my big mouth?”

Vanille stroked Ruby’s bottom again, adding a light squeeze. Ruby would have felt relieved, if the lightest touch of the oven mitt wasn’t enough to make the lingering welts all across her bottom scream in protest. “Precisely! Your bad attitude is what earned you an extra-long, extra-hard, extra-good spanking in the woodshed today. And it’s also what landed you tail-first in that thorny rose bush, and it’s also what earned you *another* bare-bottomed spanking, and a long timeout on the porch in front of all the neighbors. Do you *want* another spanking, Miss Ruby?”

Quivering, Ruby shook her head, her voice breathy. “No, ma’am! No more spanking, please!”

But Vanille gave Ruby another good spank anyway. “But do you *deserve* another spanking, Miss Ruby?”

Ruby nodded, tears spilling down her face. “Yes, ma’am! I... I’m a bad, bad, bat girl! And I deserve to be spanked!”

Vanille sighed with relief, and patted Ruby's bottom to alert her the spanking was about to start in earnest. "That's right. Now, keep your head held high, along with your bottom. I always say, there's nothing quite like sticking out your *bottom* during a spanking, to teach *you* how to stick it out til the end of a spanking."

Sniveling, Ruby shakily held her position, determined to at least accept her spanking with some shred of dignity and class. But the moment she felt the next spank, Ruby threw back her head and wailed. *"Ma-maaaah!"*

Satisfied that Ruby was already making excellent progress in fixing her attitude, Vanille only delivered ten solid spanks, before straightening Ruby up. "There, that's more than enough to make the point."

Ruby buried her face in Vanille's bosom, struggling to breathe between sobs. "... M-muh b-bad... girl... I'm bad... I screw... everything... up... I'm just a screw up!"

Vanille embraced Ruby, gently stroking the back of her head. "Now, now... You're not a screw up. And you're not a bad girl, neither. You've been making some bad decisions. But you've also admitted your mistake, and accepted responsibility. It takes both courage, and maturity, to recognize you need to take accountability. You're a fine young woman, Miss Ruby."

Ruby clung tight to Vanille, taking strange comfort from the sound of Vanille's heartbeat. "**Snnooork!** ... You really mean it? ... **sniff**... You don't think I'm a bad influence?"

The tender moment was interrupted by the sound of Annie's fits of giggles. When Annie noticed Vanille staring daggers at her, she literally wiped the smirk off her face, and started to whistle nervously.

Vanille sighed. "I think you and Annie *both* have a little growing up to do, that's all. But we can talk more about that tonight... when I come to *tuck you in* for bed. Annie, do you have anything you'd like to say to Miss Ruby? She's been having a trying day. I'm sure you can sympathize, given that you're in a similar boat."

As Annie suddenly remembered her coming bedtime spanking, the idea of spanking suddenly became less funny. "Er... I'm sorry you got spanked again, Miss Ruby. Maybe... we can save part of your cake?"

"An excellent suggestion. Come along, Miss Ruby, why don't you try giving this a flip? I once taught Annie this trick when I burnt my bunny bundt cakes! First, separate it from the pan, and..."

As Ruby tried to flip the remains of her cake, it slapped onto the plate with a look of defeat. A few charred crumbles dribbled off the counter, and onto the floor. Sucking down a breath, Ruby quickly

bent over to scoop up the debris. “I’m so sorry, Mrs. Vanille! I’ll clean it up! Please don’t spank me!”

Vanille giggled, and patted Ruby’s upturned bottom gently to get her attention. “There, there, Miss Ruby. I’d never spank you for a simple accident. Up you get, dear!”

As Vanille set to work, Annie and Ruby pressed at either side of her to watch closely. Their red, spanked bottoms acted like two bookends on either side of Vanille’s fluffy white cotton tail.

***

Crème hummed to herself as she waited at the dinner table. Saucer and Choco the Chi were seated in baby seats at either side of Crème, wearing bibs along with their bow ties.

Then, Annie emerged from the kitchen carrying a pitcher of lemonade, chatting over her shoulder as she walked. “... But *why* do I have to serve Sonar? I’m an official Freedom Fighter too! Can’t I just join the dinner, as a regular guest?”

Vanille entered right behind Annie, balancing a tray of bowls, all filled with steaming carrot soup. “It’s your own fault for earning a whole week of being grounded, not mine for having guests this week. And even if you weren’t in trouble, you’d still have your share of chores to do, as long as I’m responsible for you.”

Annie set down the lemonade and held her hands out in supplication. “But can’t we just pause my grounding for one day? Then I’ll pay it off at the end of the week! Or do double chores later! But if you make me act like a waitress, everyone else is gonna know that–”

Vanille set down her tray, and hushed Annie with a single finger. “I don’t want to hear any arguments, Miss *Annelisa* Roza. You have incurred a debt to society, and part of paying off that debt will include serving others. I won’t force you to tell the whole, absurd tale of your rash misadventure, but if anyone asks... I expect you to give them a truthful answer.”

Ruby appeared at the doorway, carrying a tray of rubber children’s plates, complete with macaroni and cheese and broccoli. “Crème! Guess what? I made this for you all by my–”

But Ruby winced as she was interrupted by Annie’s obnoxious groan. As Annie rounded on Vanille, she put her hands on her hips, and rolled her eyes. “Ugh! But, *Vanille*.... Eep–”

Vanille silenced Annie with a single, controlled pinch to the ear. “No more rolling your eyes, and no more backtalk. I’m sorry, Annie, but you’ve just earned yourself another spanking.”

Annie clutched her bottom with both hands. “Eeeek! Please no, Mrs. Vanille! I’ll serve dinner! I won’t argue! I won’t roll my eyes!”

Vanille marched like a soldier, leading Annie into the kitchen. “Yes, you *will* serve dinner, and no, you *won’t* be impolite. Because I’m going to reintroduce your bottom to my wooden spoon, to help remind you!”

Annie dug her fingers deep into her aching buttocks, wailing as she was led to her doom. “But... but my butt’s already so sore! No mooooooore! *Baaaaw!”*

Annie’s pitiful wails were muffled slightly as she disappeared into the kitchen, before they were cut off by the unmistakable sound of a wooden spoon spanking a bright pink Needle-mouse’s bright red butt. Then Annie’s cries took on a distinctly less whiny, more desperate quality. “Yeow! Yoohoo! Yowza! Youch! Yipe! Yikes! Yee! *Yaaiieeeeek!”*

Ruby glanced at the kitchen, smiling like she was savoring a scrumptious sweet, then served Crème, Saucer, and Choco. “As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, I cooked this meal for you myself! I just had to follow the instructions on the box and... *voila!* Now, if you’ll excuse me, Mrs. Crème still needs me in the kitchen. She mentioned you kids will need to get started eating to get ready for your bedtime, so don’t wait for us... I suspect we’ll be busy cooking *something* in the kitchen for a good, long while!”

Ruby strutted to the kitchen door, her bare bottom swishing and swaying behind her with every step.

Crème caught a glimpse of Annie Roza, straining to touch her tiptoes as Vanille mercilessly applied a wooden spoon to her upturned buttocks, before the door shut and muffled the sound of the ongoing lesson in manners. Finally, Crème sighed. "Goodness, gracious! Dinner is so boring without company to share it with... And plain broccoli is even more boring!"

Pouting, Crème played with the four stalks of broccoli on her plate. Like most children, Crème often needed to be reminded to eat a few bites of healthy foods, although Vanille wasn't as strict as most parents are about "cleaning your plate."

The only hard rule was that Crème had to eat at least three bites of her veggies, before being eligible to have any dessert. Vanille also knew how to make Crème's broccoli special, with just a sprinkle of cheese and spice, so that she never had a problem wanting to eat every bite. But Ruby the Roussette's broccoli... It was just plain, old boring.

Crème craned her neck to peek at the kitchen door. Sure enough, Annie's spanking was still dragging on, without interruption. Crème tapped her fork to her lips. "Why, Mr. Saucer, Mr. Choco, I

do believe you boys need some extra broccoli, to help you grow big and strong! I'll just... share some of mine with you!"

Crème served all four stalks of her broccoli, two each to Mr. Saucer and Mr. Choco. As they eyed the extra broccoli curiously, cartoon question marks appeared above their heads, before they cheered and carried on eating.

With a sigh of relief, Crème started to eat her mac n' cheese, and without the broccoli, she found she had room for every bite.

Then, a troubling thought occurred to her. "Hold on... what if Mother counted how many servings of broccoli were still on each plate?"

Crème tensed, looking back and forth to Saucer and Choco's plates. Saucer had three servings of broccoli left, meaning he'd eaten three already, but it would only look like he'd eaten one. Choco had four left, meaning he'd eaten two, but it would look like he hadn't even touched his broccoli. Would that look suspicious? No, it was fine. Choco was usually a fussy eater.

At that instant, the handle of the kitchen door turned! Vanille entered, leading a sniffling Annie behind her. "**Hic!** Mmm'sowwy... Mrs. Vanille... So, so sorry!"

“Now, now, Annie. You’ve already apologized. I know you’ll do better tomorrow. So let’s get you girls fed before bed! Nothing like tucking in, before you get tucked in!”

Ruby strutted in, wearing a relaxed smirk on her face. But the expression vanished as soon as she spotted the hard wooden chairs at the dining room table. “Ah... could we perhaps stand up while we eat tonight?”

Vanille giggled, but shook her head. “No, Miss Ruby. I expect you to sit and join our dinner party tomorrow. Hopefully your bottom will have recovered by then, but if not, tonight is your only chance to practice the art of sitting on a well-spanked backside, without making it too obvious that you just got a heinie whoopin’. Now, sit yourself down!”

Ruby and Annie hesitated, but obeyed. After shifting uncomfortably on their seats, they settled their weight down. With a nod of approval, Vanille turned and eyed Crème’s plate. “Crème, are you a Clean Plate Ranger? I’m impressed! You usually don’t have that big of an appetite. Ah, you must be outgrowing the children’s plates!”

Crème bit her lip. She hated telling lies, especially to her mother. Nervously, she played with the last few pieces of stray macaroni. “Well, maybe not every bite?”

“Oh, don’t sell yourself short. Remember, you don’t have to eat everything I serve you, just so long as you eat three big bites of your greens! Do you have room for dessert?”

Crème held her stomach. For some strange reason, it was churning, as if she’d eaten far more than she actually had. “Er… I don’t think I should have dessert today. My tummy hurts…”

“Well, after eating four whole servings of broccoli, I’m not surprised.”

Ruby flinched as she felt her bare bottom press against the seat, before whistling and resting her weight down with a relaxed sigh. “You really liked my broccoli? I’m flattered! I watched it carefully the whole time it boiled!”

Vanille examined Saucer and Choco’s plates and shook her head. “Saucer, you haven’t eaten much broccoli… and Choco, you haven’t even touched yours. I’m afraid you’ll need to take at least three big bites, before you get any dessert.”

Choco moaned sadly, patting his tummy. “Chi chi?”

“What, no dessert? Is your tummy completely full? But you haven’t had much mac and cheese, and that’s usually… your favorite?”

With a stern frown, Vanille knelt and scooped up a stray piece of broccoli that had fallen on the floor. When she set it next to Choco's plate, there were five stalks in total. "Miss Ruby, you're quite sure you put exactly four stalks of broccoli on every plate?"

Looking slightly nervous, Ruby nodded.

Vanille turned to face Crème and Saucer. "Crème, do you know where this piece of broccoli came from? Do you suppose it's possible that Saucer accidentally dropped it, and it rolled all the way over to Choco's side?"

Crème fidgeted her feet. "Well... I... I dunno... if that's really what happened. You see, the truth is..." Crème swallowed a lump in her throat. "... I didn't really eat all my broccoli... I gave two pieces to Mr. Saucer, and two pieces to Mr. Choco..."

Ruby blinked, then pouted. "Wait, so that means you didn't eat *any* of the broccoli I made for you?"

Crème's eyes were watery. "No, Miss Ruby. I thought it looked yucky compared to Mother's broccoli. But Saucer and Choco really seemed to like it, so I figured they'd eat mine all up."

Now Ruby's eyes were watery. "You thought my first dinner ever looked *yucky?"*

Vanille bent low to look Crème directly in the eye. “But why did you sneak it onto Saucer and Choco’s plates without asking? Were you planning to let them get in trouble for not eating their greens?”

Crème hunched her shoulder as she gripped the sides of her chair. “I didn’t think that far ahead… You’ve given them some of my extra greens before, when I was finished and they were still hungry.”

“That’s because they asked me politely for more, and I was already sure you’d had enough to eat. Think carefully, Crème. When you gave them your broccoli, did you think you were doing a good thing, or a bad thing?”

Crème hung her head. “I… I knew I was doing a bad thing. Are you going to spank me now?”

“Yes, Crème, I *have* to spank you now. First, I need you to go to the kitchen, and fetch me the small bread paddle. You’ll find the step ladder tucked in the storage space beside the oven.”

Crème’s eyes popped wide open. “A… p-paddle? I’ve never been sp-spanked with a paddle before!”

Vanille gently set Crème on her feet, and aimed her to face the kitchen door. “I know, Crème. But you’re old enough to know better now, so this is going to be the hardest spanking you’ve ever

gotten. Nevertheless, I promise you can get through this if you decide to be brave. Are you ready to obey?"

Crème scrunched her face up, then sniffled. "Yes, ma'am. I'm scared... but I want to obey."

Already rubbing tears from her eyes, Crème marched toward the kitchen. After less than a minute, she reappeared, cradling the antique bread paddle in her hands. It had a curved one-handed handle, and a deep scoop, like a cross between a short spatula and a thick paddle spoon.

After Crème offered up the implement, Vanille scooped it up and set it on the table. "Thank you, Crème. Next, I need to make sure you understand exactly what you did wrong, and why you need a spanking. Do you remember what the rule is for what merits a spanking on your bare bottom?"

Crème tightened her mouth, before nodding. "Yes, ma'am. Deliberate disobedience, defiance, or dishonesty deserves a bare-bottomed spanking."

Vanille held Crème's shaky hands in her own to steady them. "That's right, Crème. And because you were dishonest, I'm afraid this spanking has to be on your bare bottom."

Crème made a soft, whining sound. “But… but I told the truth, when you asked me about the broccoli.”

“And I’m proud of you for choosing to tell me the truth in the end. But the fact remains that hiding your broccoli was *deliberate* and *deceptive*. In a way, you were telling a lie, even without using words. So that means you’re getting this spanking on the bare bottom, right from the start. Put your hands behind your head, so I can bare your booty.”

Crème’s hands flew to obey. Her watery, puppy-dog eyes had no effect on Vanille, who stoically reached under Crème’s skirt and carefully slid down her undergarments, first gliding them just below her quivering bottom, then all the way down to her knees.

Next, Vanille gently lifted up her daughter, laid her down across her lap, and flipped up her orange skirt. “Normally, you would have gotten a hand spanking for fussing about eating your greens. So we will start with that… just as a warm up.”

Having finished lecturing, Vanille delivered the first, resounding spank across the center of Crème’s bottom, right below her fluffy white cotton tail. Crème wailed pitifully, but Vanille appeared to be unmoved, and fell into a slow, steady pattern of spanking, alternating between Crème’s left and right bottom cheeks. After eleven spanks, Vanille paused. “That was what you’d normally get for trying to sneak dessert without taking at least three bites of your

greens first. Now, you're getting a spanking for trying to trick Mr. Saucer and Mr. Choco into eating your broccoli for you. You are supposed to be a good big sister, and look out for them. This spanking is for letting them down..."

Vanille renewed the spanking, using the same firm, relentless pace, using one hand to gently hold Crème down across the small of her back. But after only five swats, Crème howled and reached a hand back, just short of covering her bottom. Vanille raised her voice to a commanding tone, though without anger. "Hands down, Crème."

Crème gripped the seat of the chair to keep her hands away from her bottom. "Sorry, Mommy!"

"That was close. You were an inch away from earning yourself some extra spanks. Here, try holding onto this..." Vanille scooped up the bread paddle, and handed it to Crème. "Every time you feel tempted to cover your bottom, just hold tight onto this paddle, and think about how you told a lie."

Tears streamed down Crème's cheeks as she focused on the paddle. "I tol' a lie..."

Vanille continued the hand spanking, delivering another ten swats. Crème tried her best to lay still and not cry, but by the tenth spank, her tears were flowing freely. Vanille patted Crème's bottom, then released her hold on Crème's back to reach for the bread paddle.

"That will do for the warm up. Hand me the paddle, Crème. You're about to find out what a 'big girl spanking' means."

Crème whimpered as she shakily lifted the paddle above her head, and released it. Her lip was trembling, her nose was twitching, her arms were shivering, and her knees were shaking. Vanille rubbed the convex side of the bread paddle across Crème's bottom in circles. "When I give Annie a paddling in the woodshed, do you know how many swats she gets?"

Crème's ears flopped as she shook her head. "No, Mommy... how many?"

"She gets at least twenty swats. And more if she needs extras. A paddle feels a lot like my hairbrush, or the wooden spoon, but heavier. And it covers a lot more of your bottom... do feel that?"

Vanille switched her grip on the paddle, and stroked the concave side along Crème's upturned bottom. The cupped shape was the perfect size to match the surface area of each of Crème's butt cheeks. Crème rubbed her feet together as she realized that just two swats would be enough to cover her entire bottom. "Yes, Mommy... so I deserve twenty, too? ... Uh, I mean, twenty, *also,* not twenty-two."

Ruby quickly stifled a chuckle. Vanille patted Crème's bottom, just hard enough to send a jiggle through the soft puppy fat. "Well, Crème, ordinarily I'd give Miss Annie—or Miss Ruby—at least

twenty smacks with a paddle. But they are also much older than you. You are getting this spanking on your bare bottom because you played a deceptive trick. That was the initial lie that got you in trouble, but you also chose to tell me the truth when I confronted you. You still need to get a paddling for lying, but if you had lied to my face, you would be getting an *additional* twenty, on top of what you're already getting. Does that make sense?"

Crème tensed, her buttocks clenching, before she relaxed and lay still. "Yes, ma'am. If I ever tell a lie on purpose, I get an extra twenty spanks. But I still need the spanking for the broccoli trick, because that was a kind of lie."

"Exactly. And because this is your first time feeling the paddle, I think four good, hard swats will be more than enough to serve as a lasting reminder. But you'll still have to hold still and be a brave girl to get through this. I want you to politely count each stroke, and say thank you, just like you've heard Annie do when she's in this situation. With your best manners. Take a deep breath to help you relax, and grit your teeth, so you don't bite your tongue by mistake."

Crème took a sharp breath through her nose, before exhaling, and setting her jaw. "Yes, Mother."

Vanille patted Crème's left buttock a couple times to practice her motion, then raised the paddle high, watching carefully for the precise moment when she knew Crème would be ready. Then

Vanille brought down the paddle with a full, fluid motion of her arm, the follow through flattening Crème's entire lower-left buttock.

Annie flinched at the echoing sound of the clap, but she knew from experience that a spank with a cupped hand or concave-shaped implement actually hurt less, despite sounding louder. After all, the impact of the paddle was being more evenly distributed, rather than concentrated on one spot.

Unfortunately, Crème didn't know any of this. She howled with all her might, her arms and legs locking as she spasmed. Vanille patted Crème's bottom and stroked gently to get her attention. "That's only one, Crème. Next, you need to say, 'One, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am.'"

Crème's eyes boggled as she tried to process the fresh sting, feeling the rising heat being pressed against her bottom by the rough surface of the bread paddle. "Gah-ha! ... One, ma'am! Thank you, ma'am!"

Vanille was ready. By the time Crème had finally worked up the courage to count the first stroke, Vanille had already raised her arm high, and timed the second stroke of the paddle to act as a punctuation mark for Crème's final sentence.

This one was aimed at Crème's right buttock, leaving a wide, red mark that matched the first. Crème steeled herself, expecting to feel

the third stroke as soon as she finished her count. "*Ahaaa!* ... Two, ma'am! Thank you, ma'am!"

But Vanille didn't deliver the third stroke immediately. Instead, she switched her grip on the paddle, rubbing the convex surface in figure eight patterns across Crème's lower bottom. As Vanille lifted her knee, Crème was forced to angle her bottom upward at a tauter angle, revealing her lower sit spots to the rough touch of the paddle.

Crème stiffened, feeling how different the cooling touch of the paddle felt, and wondering what it could mean. Then, without tapping Crème's bottom, Vanille raised the paddle high, and brought it down on the left butt cheek. The result was that the third spank took Crème by surprise. Vanille aimed the outermost point of the curved paddle at Crème's exposed sit spot, meaning the most soft, sensitive area of Crème's bottom took most of the brunt of the hardest point of the curved paddle. Crème shouted once, more from terror than pain, then squealed as her brain registered the deeper ache left by the heavy paddle. "Aaah! ... Eee-hee-heeeee! Oh, no!"

Crème squirmed atop Vanille's lap, but Vanille held her firmly in place, and delivered a series love tap to the exact spot she had just spanked. "Remember your count, or I will start your spanking over again, from the very beginning."

Crème froze, balling her hands into fists. "No, please! Three, ma'am! Thank you, ma'am!"

Satisfied, Vanille tapped Crème's other sit spot, to alert her of the coming stroke. "Take a deep breath, and grit your teeth."

Crème's chest felt tight, but as she obeyed her instructions, she felt a strange sense of calm wash over her.

Crème had a peculiar realization: this feeling *wasn't* relief.

In her mind's eye, the wooden bread paddle had transformed into a horrible monster with fangs and claws. But as Crème exhaled, she had an odd sense that she needed this last stroke. Otherwise, she'd only be unable to sit on one half of her bottom, and that just wouldn't do.

Remembering how clever and sneaky she'd felt about the broccoli trick, Crème tried to lift her bottom high, willing for the spank to land so she could begin her timeout right away. Of course, she did want the spanking to be over. But Crème also wanted it to happen. She had told a lie, and little liars needed to get spankings.

Vanille slammed the paddle down across Crème's other sit spot, leaving a splotchy red spot to match the previous one. Crème howled, her scream exploding out of her in a gust of air, before she gasped, and counted. "*Aaaaargh!* ...Haa...Hoo...Four, ma'am... Thank you, ma'am... Oh, dear, oh dearie me... I'm so sorry..."

Vanille sighed with relief, and set down the paddle, before stroking the small of Crème's back. "I forgive you, Crème. Have you learned your lesson?"

Crème sniffled, then twisted to look at her Mother, with a peculiar, pensive expression. "I think so. I never want to be deceptive ever again. You should probably put me in timeout for a while, though. That way I can think about it while the lesson is still fresh."

Vanille beamed with pride as she set Crème back on her feet, and quickly fixed her panties. "An excellent suggestion. But first, I want you to apologize to Mr. Saucer, Mr. Choco, and Miss Ruby."

"Yes, ma'am. I'm so sorry, Mr. Saucer, and Mr. Choco. I let you both down. Miss Ruby, I'm sorry for what I did."

Quizzically, Ruby looked back and forth from Crème to Vanille. "Huh? Why do I get an apology?"

Before Vanille could answer, Crème politely raised her hand. "Because I was disrespectful to your cooking. You made a whole meal for me, and I didn't show proper appreciation for the work you did."

Ruby blinked. "Oh... now that you mention it, that *did* hurt my feelings a bit... But I'm not mad at you, kiddo. I'd say you've suffered enough."

Crème puffed up her chest, and shook her head. “I still need a time out. Mom, since I’m a big girl now, does that mean I have to sit on the scary timeout chair, like Annie has to?”

Vanille hid her mouth behind her hand as she giggled. “You mean the old punishment stool? No, that’s only for very naughty girls, when they’re being *particularly* stubborn. Just have a seat in the corner, on your regular time out stool. When I come to release you, it will be straight to bedtime.”

Crème bowed her head as she accepted a kiss from her Mother. “Yes, Mommy. Thank you for spanking me.”

Vanille guided Crème to her stool and sat her in timeout, facing the corner. “You are welcome, Crème. I love you most.”

Crème winced as she felt the hard, unforgiving wooden seat press flat against her sore, stinging bottom. “I love you most-est.”

At long last, Annie, Ruby, and Vanille settled down for a quick bite of mac and cheese, their stomachs growling. Without being asked, Annie started to collect the plates and silverware.

Ruby noticed, and jumped to help, not sure if leaving her plate would count as another spanking offense. Vanille held them both by the shoulder. “It’s nearly time for Crème to go down for the night.

You two will be going to bed in the same room, so I expect you to follow the same bedtime rules. Annie, your old pajamas are in the dresser drawer. Miss Ruby will need to borrow a pair. Remember to keep your bottoms bare and ready for your bedtime spanking."

Annie and Ruby frowned, but bowed their heads and answered respectfully. Both of them had privately hoped Mrs. Vanille would forget about her promise to give them a final spanking before bed.

***

Crème's bedroom was decorated with a peaches-and-cream color motif. There were twin bunk beds decorated with karate and race car patterns, for Mr. Saucer and Mr. Choco, but Vanille had set up two cribs to free up the twin beds for Annie Roza and Ruby the Roussette.

Annie blushed as she found one of her favorite old pairs of one-piece pajamas, featuring decorative designs inspired by the characters from the Tarot card deck. Mrs. Vanille had sewn the collar and lace herself, as a Christmas gift for Annie.

As Annie stared at the pajamas with a mix of nervousness and nostalgia, Ruby the Roussette dropped down from the ceiling, hanging upside down like a Vampire, and snatched the pajamas out of Annie's grip. "Yoink! How daring! I simply adore the

old-fashioned design. These might not look too terrible, at least not while I'm rocking them."

Annie snarled, and held tight to the pajama pants. "Hey! These are mine! You can't have them."

Still hanging upside down, Ruby released her grip on the pants, and held up her hands in surrender. "Whatever! I don't want to fight about it. It's not worth another spanking. But I need something to wear to bed, and Vanille told you to pick something for me to wear. And I'm not bailing you out if she asks why I'm still naked at bedtime."

Annie swallowed, and quickly examined the remaining pajamas. Several pairs she remembered, but were clearly too small for her now. Then Annie spotted a two-piece set of pajamas featuring a custom pattern... Sonar the Needle-mouse's face, along with decorative rings. Not wanting anyone to see those, including Ruby, Annie quickly tried to hide the pajamas deeper in the drawer. Then she heard a knock outside the bedroom. "Are you girls decent yet?"

Sucking down a sharp breath, Annie quickly thrust the Tarot-card pajamas into Ruby's outstretched hands, and threw on the Sonar pajamas. "Almost ready, Mrs. Vanille!"

To Annie, there were only things worse than letting Ruby see her wearing Sonar the Needle-mouse PJ's: letting Ruby see her get

*spanked* while wearing her Sonar the Needle-mouse PJ's, and letting anyone but her actually wear her Sonar the Needle-mouse PJ's."

Ruby smirked as she unzipped the one-piece pajamas and pulled them on. "These are cozy… Wait a minute, these are a one-piece? So how am I supposed to–"

Annie shook her head as she tucked her baggy pajama pants to rest just below her bottom. "Just tuck down the flap at the back. The buttons snap right off!"

Ruby twisted to examine her backside, and sure enough she found the buttons. "Wait… a drop seat? But aren't those just for toddlers? I thought these were supposed to be classy. I wouldn't have picked these if I'd known–"

"Girls? Are you trying to stall for time? If so, there's no point delaying the inevitable. I expect to see two bare bottoms ready and waiting for a spanking the moment I count to three."

As the door handle turned, Annie grit her teeth. Wanting to make sure that Vanille had no reason to be displeased with the state of her bottom before the spanking, she quickly held down the front of her shirt to preserve some of her modesty, while using her dainty pink tail to hold up the hem of the pajama shirt in the back. "Hurry! Butt bare, or we're both in trouble!"

“One… Two…”

Ruby yanked roughly at the flap, and with a snap, the drop-seat flopped down.

The instant the door opened, Annie and Ruby quickly turned to face the wall, making sure that their bare bottoms would be plainly in view. They were just in the nick of time.

Vanille strode into the room, followed by Crème, Saucer, and Choco. To Annie and Ruby’s surprise, Vanille had changed out of her formal dress, and was wearing a simple, lilac night gown. “And… three! Well, well, you’re both ready for your bedtime spanking, just as I asked. I suspect you cut it a bit close. Do I guess correctly, Miss Annie?”

Annie nodded, her nose pressed against the wall. “Yes, ma’am. We just barely made it, ma’am.”

“Miss Ruby, did Annie explain what would happen, if you dawdle too long before a bed time spanking, and aren’t properly prepared?”

Ruby twitched. “Yes, ma’am. If either of us weren’t ready, we’d both have gotten an extra licking with a belt, ma’am.”

"Precisely. But I'm glad it won't come to that, for tonight at least. Crème, have a seat on your bed. I want you to see *exactly* what happens to naughty girls who pick fights and play dangerous games."

Crème shuffled her feet. Then she started playing with the drop-seat at the back of her orange-and-yellow footie pajamas. One of the buttons was loose, letting the corner of the flap lie flipping and flopping. "I've been wondering... Since I did a really bad thing today, and needed a big girl spanking, will I be getting a bedtime spanking, too?"

Vanille kneeled low to reach Crème's eye level. "Don't worry, Crème. I already gave you a good spanking today."

"But... isn't it unfair, that Annie and Ruby both get bedtime spankings for being bad, but I don't?"

"No, because they are both older than you, and because what they did was much more dangerous. Yes, you did a bad thing by trying to hide your broccoli, but you've been punished enough. Annie and Ruby set a bad example for you today, so they both need a harder spanking, to act as a reminder."

Crème bowed her head. "I dunno... I still feel so guilty. I set a bad example for Saucer and Choco today. Don't I need a spanking to help me remember, too?"

Annie twisted to look over her shoulder, shaking her head at Crème. "No! Don't do it, Crème! You don't need another spanking!"

Vanille rose to her full height. "Annie Roza, I've already warned you about talking out of turn, especially when it's time for a spanking. That stunt just earned you an extra ten spanks, on top of what you already have coming. Now, put your nose against the wall, if you don't want to feel the belt."

Cursing her stupidity, Annie pressed her nose flat against the wall. "Yes'm!"

With a sigh, Vanille knelt to face Crème again. "Crème, I think you feel guilty because you have a strong moral conscience. But spanking isn't magic. I could go on punishing you, adding more and more spankings, but that won't erase the bad feelings you have. I don't like having to spank you. The only reason I spank you is to teach you, to remind you to be the wonderful girl I know you want to be. I don't think you deserve another spanking today. But if you think you need a bedtime spanking to help you remember the life lesson you learned today, I will give you one."

Crème glanced at Saucer and Choco, then looked at her mother with tearful eyes. "I think I need another spankin' before bed, Mommy. It's like broccoli. I need it to help me grow up big and strong."

"Then you know what to do. Drop the seat of your pajamas, and go stand against the wall, between Annie and Ruby."

Crème suddenly wondered if she had bitten off more punishment-broccoli than she could chew. "Does it have to be on the bare?"

"If I give you a bedtime spanking, it's going to be a real one. You know the rules in this house. A bare bottom stays nice and bare until the spanking is all over. And you've definitely earned a bare bottom for fibbing. March your tail, little Missy."

Fumbling with the sole button holding up her drop-seat, Crème toddled to face the wall, and placed her hands behind her head to match the two older girls. Vanille took in the sight of the three bare-butt convicts standing on death row before her. "I don't want to see or hear a peep out of anyone in timeout while I'm administering the bedtime spankings. Annie Roza, you will be first. Come bend across my leg, so I can pin you in place more securely."

Annie turned and found Vanille resting a wooden hairbrush on the pillow of the low twin bed, before seating herself on the mattress, her big hare feet set wide apart. Vanille was wearing fuzzy rabbit slippers tonight. On auto-pilot, Annie waddled forward, pinching her pajama pants tight between her legs to keep them from slipping

down, and lay across Vanille's thigh, holding up her shirt at the back to keep her bottom fully exposed.

Vanille hummed, then tugged Annie's pajama pants down the rest of the way, all the way to her ankles. Then Vanille pinned Annie's legs in place with her free leg, propping up Annie's bottom at a sharp angle.

"You know exactly why you're here, so I won't lecture you any further. I care about you, Annie Roza, so I have to spank you... to make sure you never, ever take foolish risks with your life. This hurts me more than it hurts you."

"... Yes, Mrs. Vanille. I know that now. Please spank me well."

The bed springs creaked as Vanille raised her hand high. "I promise I will, Annie dear."

The hand spanking began at a firm pace, right off the bat. Annie tried to keep a silent mental count, but after forty spanks, she lost track. She was painfully aware that Vanille wasn't spanking quite as hard as she could, when she really wanted to make an impression.

But it was more than enough to raise a burning heat across Annie's seat. As Annie tried to suppress her yells, she caught sight of the wooden hairbrush resting on the pillow, and knew that her spanking wasn't nearly over. In a way, it hadn't even begun.

As Annie's thoughts centered on the rising discomfort in her bottom, she was forced to relive her entire experience in the woodshed, along with her humiliating fall into the briar patch.

The slaps were *just* hard enough to remind her of the collection of aching welts she'd already earned, and *just* fast enough to raise a soft, steady, buzzing warmth.

As Annie tried to think of anything besides her poor bottom, the only thing that came to mind was the stupid series of decisions she had made which landed her in this position... No, not stupid.

Foolish.

Annie had been a fool, and this spanking was exactly what her foolishness had merited. Just as she felt fresh tears stinging her eyes, the spanking stopped, and she saw Vanille scooping up the wooden hairbrush. "I'm sorry... Mrs. Vanille... so saaaah-reeeheeheee...."

Vanille patted Annie's bottom with the hairbrush. Even the smallest love taps stung like pins and needles. "Yes, Annie. I know that now. But I made a promise to spank you well. I love you, Annie dear..."

Annie buried her face in the mattress. "I... wuv... yoooooo-hoo-hoooooo—*Whoooaaah!*"

As Annie shut her eyes tight, she saw a flash of red stars along with every smack of the hairbrush. Everything in the world disappeared, except for a sense that she was loved and that she needed to experience every ounce of this pain, to drink this bitter cup down to the last drop.

Just as Annie melted into incoherent sobs, Vanille patted her shoulder. "Good job, Annie. We would be finished here, but I promised you ten swats for interrupting. Lie on your back, and hold up your legs."

Annie dug her fingers into the comforter. "Noooo moooore...."

Then Annie felt a sharp pop of the hairbrush, and remembered just how hard Vanille could spank, if she needed to. "No arguments."

Annie blubbered the closest she could manage to a "Yes, ma'am," as she crawled off Vanille's thigh, and rolled onto her back. Annie held her feet up, hesitantly, before Vanille deftly pinched her ankles between her fingers and lifted her feet high into the air, as if Roza was a baby in need of a diaper change.

Vanille looked Annie right in the eyes as she snatched a fuzzy rabbit slipper off her foot, and tapped the leather sole against Annie's upside down bottom. "Ten swats. I'm going to deliver them quickly so you can finally be done. Take a deep breath, and hold your legs steady."

Annie felt tears dribbling backwards down her face as she gripped the blankets, concentrating on holding still. Before, Annie had experienced the hairbrush spanking in almost a dream-like state, but as she concentrated on holding her legs up, Annie discovered she was acutely, and painfully, wide awake.

The moment Annie caught her breath, Vanille delivered ten spanks at a ferocious, lighting-fast pace.

Annie howled, but by the time she needed to catch her breath, it was already over. Annie's chest heaved as Vanille set her feet down. "That's the end of it. You've been punished enough. I know you'll do better. Would you like a hug, Annie? You don't need to give me one, if you're still mad at me. But if you want me to comfort you, I'd dearly love to."

Annie hopped up to rest on her knees on the mattress, burying her face in Vanille's stomach as she hugged her with all her might. Vanille returned the embrace, gently stroking Annie's shoulder and patting her head. "Spanking is all done. But you still need to go stand in timeout while I take care of Miss Ruby."

Annie hesitantly climbed off the bed, every movement an additional agony. But as Annie turned to rejoin Crème and Ruby, Vanille stopped her. "No, against the opposite wall. Away from their timeout spot."

Annie blinked, her eyes red and blurry. “Wuh? Why there?”

Vanille giggled. “So I don’t forget that I already spanked you, I suppose. I’m such a scatter-brain, I might spank you again by mistake.”

Annie spun on her heels and toddled straight to the opposite side of the room, ignoring the Sonar-the-Needle-mouse pajamas tangled around her ankles. As Annie pressed her nose against the wall, she was able to overhear everything, but didn’t dare peep.

“Ruby? You know the drill, dear. It’s been a long day, so let’s get your last spanking over with. No need for another scolding.”

Ruby whined, but obediently marched to take her position across Vanille’s lap. Annie heard the springs of the bed creak, and felt the hairs stand up on the back of her neck, before the tense silence was broken by the first clap of Vanille’s hand across Ruby’s voluptuous buttocks.

Out of curiosity, Annie tried to count the number of whacks. At precisely one hundred spanks, Vanille paused the hand spanking. “You’re taking your spanking very well so far, Ruby. But this hairbrush will be the hardest part to get through. If you feel tears coming on, don’t be afraid to have a good cry.”

Ruby's voice was strained, anger mixed with forced politeness. "I'm... not... gonna... cry... ma'am."

"It's your choice, Ruby. It won't change the severity of your spanking either way. But speaking from experience, I find it helps... Very well, let's carry on."

The next echoing wallop, as Vanille's hairbrush flattened one of Ruby's buttocks, seemed to send a reverberating shockwave through the room. Ruby felt the force of the impact traveling through the tender, meaty flesh of her hindquarters in rippling waves, as if she was experiencing time in slow motion.

*"Agghk!"*

Ruby quickly choked back her scream, fighting to keep her eyes wide open. Instinctively, she knew that if she closed her eyes for a moment, the budding tears would quickly build up and spill over. Ruby endured ten strokes of the hairbrush like this, before she felt the eleventh swat, and thrust her head back with a snarl. "Dammit!"

Ruby sucked down a breath past her clogged nose, and realized that the only thing keeping two fresh tear drops from succumbing to gravity was her holding this absurd position. Gritting her teeth, Ruby readied herself for the next spank. But Vanille only patted Ruby's bottom, rubbing the cool wood of the hairbrush in circles across Ruby's sit spots. "Miss Ruby, do *not* use that word in front of

my family. And stop pretending it doesn't hurt. You're not fooling anyone, including yourself."

Vanille began to apply the hairbrush again, in a slow, steady pattern, gradually increasing the tempo. Ruby growled, then groaned, then finally broke down crying, though Annie had a feeling Ruby was internally fighting the urge to shed tears even as she lost all choice in the matter.

Annie counted forty whacks with the hairbrush, and it was finally over.

Ruby seethed, her voice muffled slightly as she pressed her face against the mattress. Vanille patted Ruby's bottom with her hand. "On your back, Miss Ruby. You've earned ten extra whacks with my slipper, too."

Ruby snorted, and felt snot dribbling freely down from her nose. "Buh? But I laid still and didn't fight you, the whole time!"

"I warned you about using the d-word in my house. I've been patient, but you also need a reminder to control your tongue. It's ten swats with my slipper now, or another trip to the woodshed tomorrow morning. What will it be?"

Ruby dug her long nails into the comforter. "I'll obey! I'll take the ten now!"

Vanille landed a warning swat on Ruby's bottom. "Then lie down. Legs up."

Ruby's eyes went wide as she felt herself being pulled into the diaper position. Ruby's eyes watered as she saw Vanille remove her other slipper and raise it high. Dimly, Ruby wondered if Vanille's other arm was getting tired. "... M'sorry, ma'am..."

Vanille nodded curtly, then brought down her slipper across Ruby's upturned bottom with a blinding stroke. Ruby shut her eyes tight, and felt tears spilling down her face. Ruby had no strength left to even pretend to fight the tears. After ten lightning fast spanks, Ruby was blubbering like a baby, the effect only heightened by being held in the diaper position. As Ruby struggled to catch her breath, Vanille casually put her slippers back on. Finally Ruby managed to gasp. "... I'm... sorry... Mrs. Vanille... I *really* didn't want to curse in front of your family, honest!"

Vanille sighed as examined her slippers. "Then don't do it again."

Ruby heard the cold finality in the words, and felt her heart ache worse than her bottom. Ruby struggled to straighten herself, ignoring the stabbing pain in her bottom to sit in what she hoped would be considered proper posture. "Please... forgive me... I don't want to be a burden..."

Vanille turned to face Ruby, with concern written on her face. “Oh, Ruby, dear. Of course I forgive you. And you are not a burden. Listen carefully, Miss Ruby…”

As Vanille seated herself next to Ruby, Ruby instinctively shifted her weight off her aching backside, and found herself leaning close to Vanille for support. “… I think you have a sharp mind, and a determined heart. Those are precisely the qualities that got your bottom into so much trouble today, but I’d be honored to have a daughter like you…”

As Vanille awkwardly held up her arm, Ruby recognized it as an invitation for a hug and eagerly rushed to sit on Vanille’s lap, returning the hug with all her might. “Thank you, Mrs. Vanille. If I ever swear again, please haul me straight to the woodshed and wear my ass out!”

Vanille raised an eyebrow, and Ruby cleared her throat, looking sheepish.

“Uh—Ahem! By which I mean, my *asinine* attitude!”

Vanille sighed, gently cradling the back of Ruby’s head. “You have my word, Ruby. You know, I’ve already grown quite fond of you. You’re welcome under my roof any time…”

Vanille stroked Ruby's lower back, before patting her bottom. "... so long as you agree to respect the rules of my house."

Ruby stiffened, feeling a delightful feeling deep in her stomach. As Ruby looked at Vanille, a strange thought suddenly occurred to her...

Oh, how Ruby would like a chance to spank Vanille for a change. It was not a desire born out of petty revenge. Just a simple, intriguing thought.

After looking deep into Vanille's eyes, Ruby winked playfully. "Yes, Vanille. As long as I'm a guest at your house... it's *your* rules."

Vanille's eyelashes fluttered. "Very good. Then straight to timeout with you, Ruby... and it's still *Mrs.* Vanille, for now. At least until you've completed community service. Understood?"

Ruby sidled to face the wall next to Annie, flashing a Mona Lisa smile as she twisted to look over her shoulder, bare butt on full display. "Yes, ma'am!"

Vanille gave Ruby a single stern look. Ruby received the unspoken message loud and clear, and turned to press her nose against the wall. Satisfied, Vanille turned to address her final charge. "Turn around, Crème, dear. It's finally your turn. You've asked for this

bedtime spanking of your own volition. This is your last chance to back out. Are you having second thoughts?"

As Crème stepped out of timeout, she held her hands behind her back, contemplating the lingering marks left by the bread paddle. "I thought about it a lot while I was still in timeout. I'm still scared of the spanking... But I'm a big girl now. I should have known better. Please, spank me, Mommy, to teach me better."

Vanille patted her lap. "Then you know what is expected of you. It's spanking time. No take-backsies!"

Crème giggled nervously. "Yeah, no take-backsies! Just... spank-buttsies!"

"You're stalling, Crème. Bottoms up."

"Yes, Mommy!" Using the super-power granted by her long, floppy ears, Crème glided through the air and settled down across her mother's lap.

Vanille patted Crème's bottom experimentally. "I love you, Crème. Say when you are ready, and we'll get this taken care of once and for all."

Crème's cotton tail shivered. "... I'm ready."

Vanille delivered the hand spanking without further ceremony. Crème started weeping freely after only three swats.

As Annie silently kept count, she was relieved to hear Vanille stop the hand spanking after only fifty spanks, half the number she and Ruby must have gotten.

But nevertheless, Vanille still paused to retrieve the hairbrush, and continued to chastise an already sobbing Crème. After delivering twenty spanks with the hairbrush, Vanille set it aside and comforted Crème.

Annie wondered if Crème was aware that she had gotten a lighter punishment, or if she had lost count long ago. But either way, Crème seemed well thoroughly chastened. "Thank you, Mama. I promise I'll do better."

"I know you will, Crème. And you're welcome. Annie? Ruby? Come have a seat with us. I want to say a little prayer for you three girls, before I tuck you in."

Ruby narrowed her eyes. "You want us to pray? I... don't think I know any good prayers."

"Not to worry, Ruby. I always pray for Crème and Annie before bed, so you're welcome to join us. You don't have to participate in this if you don't want to."

Ruby dimly remembered her mother hauling her out of bed for church on Sunday mornings, usually after a high-stakes jewel heist the previous night. “Oh, I’d be honored to join you! I used to say prayers as a little bat in the belfry. I just… haven’t said any in a while. I don’t want to say something wrong and offend you.”

Crème beamed as she folded her hands in front of her. She was too short to kneel, so she stood beside the bed. “It’s okay, Ruby. I know God will hear your prayer.”

Annie knelt down next to Crème, forgetting not to rest her sore spots down on her heels. With a wince, Annie lifted her bottom, then forced a knowing smile. “Just maybe don’t cuss?”

Ruby glanced back at her bottom, before kneeling to join Annie. “Definitely not!”

Vanille knelt at Ruby’s side. “Why don’t we go from youngest to oldest? Crème, will you begin for us?”

Crème’s ears flopped as she nodded vigorously. “Dear Mr. God, thank you for giving me my family. Thank you for Saucer, and Choco, and my Mommy. And thank you for my Daddy, too. Please keep him safe for us, until we can see him again. I’m sorry I snuck broccoli onto Saucer and Choco’s plates. I hope you can forgive me,

just like I know Mommy has forgiven me. Thank you for creating the world. Amen."

Annie felt her heart melt, before remembering it was her turn. "Um... Hello, God. It's me again. Annie Roza is here! Well, I screwed up again, but I guess you know all about that. I... know I've been asking you to help me get married to my one true love a lot. I guess I got so impatient, I wanted to make it happen myself, right now... rather than wait until I meet the right person... and wait until the time is right, too. I hope you don't mind me playing with the Tarot cards too much. I figured the signs all pointed toward Operation... uh, toward me trying to go after a Cosmic Gemstone on my own. In retrospect, that was *not* a good idea, and I don't want to ever do it again. So please help the spanking I got really stick, so I don't forget. Thank you for giving my Mom and Dad, and thank you for giving me Mrs. Vanille, for when I'm away from home. Amen."

There was a long pause, before Ruby opened her eyes. "Hang on, am I older than you? I think I joined the Freedom Fighters a year or two before you did."

Vanille shook her head. "A lady never reveals her age. But I'm quite sure I'm older than you."

Ruby shrugged. "If you figure. Apologies in advance if my prayer is horrible... Um, any suggestions on what I should open with?"

"You can start by bringing your problems to God, and laying them all down at His feet. Don't worry. If you say anything that's blasphemous, I'll just spank you."

Ruby did a double-take. "Wait, that's an option?"

Vanille sighed. "I was kidding, Ruby. You don't need to recite a florid, poetic prayer from memory. Just speak truthfully, from the heart, and God will hear you. Remember all of the discussions we've had, before, and after, your spankings? Well, talking to God is a little like that. Start by speaking frankly about what you've done wrong. Ask Him for forgiveness, and trust in His infinite forbearance. Then ask Him to help guide you, so that you can become better."

"Wait, God's a He?"

"Yes. And you're keeping Him waiting. Say your prayers."

Sensing that she was one step away from bringing down another round of fiery torment on her devil-red-shaded backside, Ruby bowed her head. "Uh... hello, God. This is Agent Ruby. Ruby the Roussette. Sorry I haven't kept up communications. Work's been murder... I've been thinking a lot lately... about my Mom. Some things about that time in my life were pretty rough. Sometimes, it was the spankings she dished out... But other times, it was her not being there to dish out a spanking, when I knew I needed one. It

took me a while to forgive her... But looking back, I know she was trying to do her best, in a bad situation. I guess I never realized this, but I was blaming you too, which doesn't really make sense, because I wasn't even sure you were there in the first place. But... when I wasn't mad at you... I think there were times I knew you were there looking out for me. Like when I was trapped in that safe-cracker-proof vault on Prison Island... Sorry about blowing up that government facility, by the way. And for helping Dr. Mechanik to blow up the moon. But that was a tense situation, so I figured you'd understand..."

Vanille's eyes popped open at the revelation that Ruby had helped blow up the moon, but Ruby continued her prayer, unperturbed. "Anyway, this is different. Today, I think I really let myself down. This isn't who I want to be. If you can help me do better... Please, help me. Even if that means I have to get spanked a lot more. Though, if I can get results without the spanking, that's my preference... And thank you for my Cosmic Gemstones. Just you wait. I'll take excellent care of them... Uh, the end? Sorry, I'm a bit rusty."

Vanille took a deep breath. "... The wording was a little... informal. But thank you, Ruby. That was a very genuine supplication. I will close us in prayer."

Ruby noticed how Annie and Crème had their eyes closed and their heads bowed respectfully, and mimicked them. Vanille waited a

moment to compose her thoughts, then began. “Almighty God, creator of the universe, thank you for your many blessings. Thank you for the gift of life this day, and every day. Thank you for my daughter, Crème. Lead me to be a wise mother, and raise her up in strength and courage, to stand up for what is right. Thank you for her friendship with Annie Roza. Teach me to nurture and protect Annie, as I would my own daughter, and thank you for blessing this world with a kind, loving person like Annie Roza. Thank you for bringing Ruby into my life. Guide me, so that I may know how to guide her, and give me the patience and self-control I need to temper mercy with justice. Forgive me, for the anger I have nurtured in my heart. Please, bless Miss Ruby with your abundant loving-kindness, and let me be a help to her in any way I can. Thank you for protecting the lives of these blessed young women today. Help us all to remember the precious gift of life, and that even in the midst of difficulty, we can emerge stronger, and aim to walk the narrow path of righteousness. In your Holy name, we pray… Amen.”

They all answered, “Amen!”

With a contented sigh, Vanille turned, and tapped Ruby on the shoulder. “I’m sorry, girls. I forgot to offer you all a kiss. That’s usually my custom after a spanking. Would you like one, Miss Ruby?”

Earlier that day, Ruby the Roussette had felt bashful plenty of times, especially when her red, spanked, bare bottom had been put on

display. But for the first time that day, Ruby the Roussette actually looked shy. “Oh… maybe a little peck on the cheek? That’s how Mom and I used to greet one another. Or when we needed to kiss and make up, after a row.”

Vanille kissed Ruby’s cheek softly. “Like this?”

To Vanille’s surprise, Ruby grasped her by the shoulder. “That was so sweet! But more like this. Follow my lead.” Ruby leaned in for two quick kisses on either side of Vanille’s, and Vanille mirrored the gesture.

Vanille giggled. “Did I do it right?”

Ruby looked at Vanille with loving, half-lidded eyes. “You’ll get the hang of it.”

Annie gestured to the top of her head, with an eager look on her face. “Could you maybe do… the silly kiss?”

Silently, Vanille bent low to kiss Annie on the top of her forehead, then on her nose. Annie returned the gesture.

As Vanille bent low to kiss her youngest daughter, Crème surprised her mother with a kiss on the lips. Vanille touched her lips. “Goodness! You haven’t kissed me on the lips since you were a toddler.”

Crème beamed. “You looked like you needed a special kiss today.”

Vanille quickly wiped a tear from her eye as she stood to her full, towering height. “Thank you, girls. Now, straight to bed. You all have a busy day tomorrow morning... Take a few moments to reflect on everything, as you lay yourselves down to sleep.”

Crème dove onto her bed and snuggled under the blankets, making sure to lay on her tummy.

Annie quickly sat on the bottom twin bed, before remembering she did not want to be doing any sitting. “Oof! I call dibs on the bottom bunk!”

Suddenly, Ruby’s face appeared from the top bunk above. “Too late! I already called top bunk!”

As they noticed Vanille approaching, both girls quickly got under the covers, careful to lay on their sides.

Already, Annie felt herself starting to drift away, as Vanille pulled the cover tight and tucked her in. “Mrs. Vanille... do you think we’ll need lots more spankings this week?”

Vanille kissed Annie on her forehead, then her nose, just the way she liked it. “That depends, Annie, dear. Knowing you, you’re likely to earn at least one or two, but I’m rooting for you.”

Ruby pressed her face tight against her pillow, but relaxed as she felt Vanille kiss her on the cheek. “Will… will we ever be too old for a spanking?”

Vanille shook her head. “Only when you decide to act like it. No one is too old for a spanking, when they need one.”

Ruby smiled. “Not even you?”

For the first time that day, Vanille the Hare looked like she wasn’t quite sure of herself. Her poker face had finally cracked. “Well, no. Now that you mention it… I suppose I’m not too old for a spanking either… At least, if I ever *really* needed one. That’s just life. Even if you don’t have someone there to lovingly tan your hide, and point you back to the right path, then life itself starts to punish you. That’s why I believe in spanking, you see. It’s good for what ails us.”

Ruby propped up to lean on her elbow. “Good to know. But what about you? Don’t you ever need someone to lovingly tan your hide, and point you back to the right path?”

Reflexively, Vanille reached to cover her bottom, before she disguised the act by folding her hands behind her back. “It’s… been a

long time since I had a friend like that. But it takes a rare sort of person to command my respect. I'm not one to be bossed around."

"Clearly not... Then again, that's how I used to feel. A strong, independent woman. But just look at me now... Deep down in my heart... I know I'm just a naughty girl, who still needs a good spanking from Mommy."

Vanille nodded, then nudged Ruby to let her finish tucking her in. "Perhaps... But I believe you'll grow into a person you can be proud of. Already, you've made a remarkable improvement. I hope I never have to spank you again, Miss Ruby."

Ruby flashed her vampiric teeth in a devious smile, before surprising Vanille with a quick kiss on the lips. "And I hope I can find a way to repay your kindness... someday. Thank you for spanking me, Mrs. Vanille."

Vanille lightly touched her lips. "You're... very welcome, Miss Ruby. Nighty night!"

After recovering her prim and proper poise, Vanille marched out of the bedroom. She had a sinking feeling that she was in for a long, long week. A mother's work was never done.

End of Chapter IV

## Chapter V: All Dressed Up With No Place to Go

Annie Roza was tumbling down towards the blue sphere known as planet Mobius, all the way from the broken remains of the moon, but she felt strangely chill about it. As she passed through the mesosphere, she caught on fire like a meteor, and thought about how strangely relaxing this was. How romantic. She was a shooting star now.

Then, far below, she saw the distant outline of Central City from above, growing closer and closer, and a familiar hare seated on the towering archways of Radical Highway's iconic red gate bridge. It was Mrs. Vanille, but in giantess form. As Mrs. Vanille clapped her lap, her voice boomed across the landscape. "Annie Roza, you've been a very bad Needle-mouse, and you're getting a very good spanking. Come lie across my lap at once."

Annie Roza gasped. "Oh no! I'm so sorry, Mrs. Vanille! I'll do better!"

Then, Annie heard Ruby the Roussette's voice appear, as if from nowhere, and turned to find the bodacious babe of a bat-girl falling alongside her. "No! Not that! Anything but that!"

"Hey! What are you doing here, Ruby?"

Roug pouted. “Whadda mean, Annie? This is my dream, isn’t it!?”

“Nuh uh! This is *my* dream!”

Beneath them, Vanille’s gigantic lap grew larger and larger, until it filled their vision. Screaming shrilly, Annie and Ruby slapped down face-first on Vanille’s thighs, but bounced as if they had landed on a giant balloon. Then, Vanille easily pinned them both down against her lap with a single finger. “Tut, tut! Bickering again? You know what that means... this spanking will have to be on your bare little booties.”

As Vanille lightly tapped their bottoms with the index finger of her other hand, Annie and Ruby’s clothing instantly disappeared. Annie gasped as she felt Vanille’s dainty index finger slam against her bottom like a giant paddle, and clutched her hands together. “Please, Mrs. Vanille! I know I deserve a spanking! But—please, oh please—not on the bare! Not in public! What if someone sees—”

Then, Annie heard familiar, echoing laughter, and turned to see the giant form of Sonar the Needle-mouse sitting on the opposite side of the bridge. A whole group of beautiful, scantily-clad giantesses were surrounding him on all sides, some human, some anthropomorphic animals.

One of the blond bombshells languishing on Sonar’s lap bore an uncanny resemblance to a young Madonna. Sonar pointed a giant

finger at Annie, then threw back his head and laughed. “Ah, ha ha! Annie Roza? You still get spanked? On your bare butt even? *Bwa-haw!* What a loser! Hey, Taylor, get a load of this!”

Taylor the Kitsune came in for a landing, holding a chilli dog in each hand, and knocked aside two or three of the hot babes clinging to Sonar. “Annie’s getting a spanking? Oh, sweet! Serves her right for making off with my Cosmic Gemstone locator. Did I miss anything, big bro?”

Sonar brushed the Madonna look-alike off his lap, sending her splashing into the river below. “Nope! Show’s just about to start. Give it to her good, Vanille.”

A deep, baritone voice boomed from across the horizon. “Yes, that’s right! And be sure to give the bat-girl a few extra swats for me!”

Annie and Ruby twisted, and spotted a gigantic red spiny-mole with dreadlocks, wearing a gaucho hat, gliding through the air, before he landed next to Sonar and Taylor, knocking aside the remainder of Sonar’s harem. Then, the spiny-mole kicked up his feet, and pulled out a box of popcorn and a cluster of purple grapes.

Ruby’s eyes went wide. “The knuckle-head? Oh, no no no! Why aren’t you on Angel Island?”

Just as he was about to bite into a juicy grape, Duster the Spiny-mole crushed them into jelly in his mighty paw, then pointed a gloved first at Ruby, his eyes blazing with hot fire. "Why? I'll tell you why, you sneak-thief! Because you stole my Master Gemstone... again! Why can't you just leave me in peace, while I guard my people's sacred emerald? Why must you keep trying to press your lips against my *face,* while I'm trying to fight you like an honorable warrior of the ancient Spiny-mole Tribe? It doesn't make any sense!"

Vanille flicked her index finger against Annie and Ruby's bottoms, with enough force to produce two, thunderous claps. "Goodness gracious, and stealing too? I'm afraid a simple spanking simply won't suffice."

Vanille leaned over, reached for the forest shore opposite the river, and pulled up an entire redwood sequoia tree by the roots. With a quick tug, Vanille cleared all the branches of the ancient tree, and held it high. "So, as a warm up... I'll be taking a switch to you."

As the shadow of the tree hovered over them, Annie and Ruby screamed and squirmed, tears spilling from their eyes like waterfalls, before Vanille whipped the tree down across their bottoms with enough force to create a sonic boom, sending a tidal wave ripping through the river before it crashed against Central City with the strength of a tsunami.

***

Annie Roza jolted up from her pillow, and bumped her head against the bottom of the upper bunk bed. “No! No more spanking!”

From the top bunk, Ruby the Roussette groaned, then hung down from the bed to look at Annie upside down. “*Mais la!* You too? What a nightmare... I dreamt we were both going to get... Oh, yeah, this part was real.”

They heard a soft murmur, and turned to see Crème lifting her head from her pillow, her face calm and composed. “Good morning! I hope you both had sweet dreams of sugar plums and fairies!”

Ruby glanced back at her behind, pouting. “Yeah, sugar plums. Nice and round and red.”

Crème flashed a buck toothed smile. “I dreamt we were all having a lovely picnic, me and mommy and Mr. Saucer and Mr. Choco–and we met you on the way and invited you to join us–and we found this wonderful little spot under a waterfall, and it was splashing and flowing and... Oh dear... oh, dearie me!”

Frowning, Crème lifted her blanket, and revealed a wet, yellow spot staining her sheets. “I think I had an accident last night.”

Ruby squeaked, just like a real bat, “Eep! Holy fu—uh—fudgesicles!”

Annie stared in horror at the stained bedsheets. “Oh dear… don’t worry, Crème. I’m sure if we just clean it up and–”

Then, with a soft fluttering of wings, Ruby gently floated down from her bunk bed. “Don’t panic! Okay, here’s the plan: I’ll sneak the bed sheets out the window and burn them in the fire pit.”

Ruby snatched the stained bed sheets and tugged them with such force, she accidentally performed the classic tablecloth trick, leaving Crème sitting on her bed completely undisturbed, if slightly confused by the absence of her bedding. Rumpling the soiled bedsheets into a tight ball, Ruby gestured toward Annie. “Agent Roza, you distract Vanille. Just use your feminine wiles to–”

Ruby glanced at Annie’s flat chest, faltered, then shoved the bundle into Annie’s arms. “On second thought, I’ll distract Vanille, you burn the evidence.”

Annie’s voice cracked. “What!?”

With perfect calm, Crème raised her hand. “But, Miss Ruby, we aren’t supposed to play with matches. You don’t want Annie to get another spanking, do you?”

Ruby curled her lip, and unbuttoned the top button of her pajamas to reveal a glimpse of her cleavage. “Of course not. And you’re not

getting another spanking neither. You just have to keep a cool head, and follow my lead."

Then there came a sharp rap-tap-tapping from the bedroom door, and Vanille the Hare let herself in. "Girls? This is your wake up call!"

Ruby squealed, dropped to her knees, and clung to Vanille's skirts. "No! Don't spank them, Mrs. Vanille! It was me! I made them do it!"

Crème shook her head. "Don't be silly, Miss Ruby. You didn't make me do it. Mother? I'm afraid I wet the bed last night. I'm so sorry."

Vanille sighed softly, then nodded. "Not to worry, Crème. It happens."

Then Vanille glanced down at Ruby and raised an eyebrow. "And did you wet the bed too, Ruby, dear?"

Ruby pressed her lips into a tight line. "Um... no, ma'am?"

Vanille patted Ruby on the head. "Then there was certainly no need to blame yourself!"

Ruby blinked. "But... aren't you going to spank us?"

Vanille stroked the side of Ruby's head. "Spank you? For what? None of you have done anything that warrants a spanking. Crème, go take a quick shower. Annie, would you be a dear and start a load of laundry with those bed sheets? Then get dressed. We have a lot of work ahead of us."

Holding the stained sheets at arm's length, Annie nodded furiously, and side-shuffled past them, before disappearing out the door. "Yes, ma'am! Right away!"

Crème used her ears like wings to flutter slowly after Annie, paused in mid-air to glance at Ruby, and giggled softly. "Tee hee! My, what a silly start to the morning this has been!"

Ruby found herself alone, kneeling at Vanille's feet. "So... you really don't spank for bed-wetting?"

Vanille lifted Ruby up onto her feet, and patted the back of Ruby's hand. "Of course not, because it wasn't on purpose. Children should never be punished for making simple mistakes. And, Ruby... I'm terribly proud of you for being willing to take the blame for someone else. But for future reference..."

Vanille reached around Ruby's waist and patted her twice across her pajama-clad posterior. Ruby winced as she felt a soft twinge from the remnants of last night's bedtime spanking.

Vanille looked Ruby deep in the eyes. “Whenever you *think* something bad has happened in my house, honesty is *always* the best policy. Do I make myself clear?”

Ruby forced a shaky, sharp-toothed smile. “Yes, ma’am! Clear as diamond!”

Vanille gave Ruby’s bottom a final love-tap, with just enough force to let Ruby to feel it through the fabric. “Excellent. In that case, let’s find you something more *appropriate* to slip into.”

***

Annie grumbled as she stuffed the soiled linens into the washing machine. “First day of community service, working my *butt* off… and Sonar will be here tonight! If I’m not careful, he’ll get a front row seat while Mrs. Vanille takes me over her knee and starts *spanking* my butt off! If Sonar knew I was a cry-baby brat who still needs spankings… He’ll never look at me the same way ever again! I need him to think I’m classy, mature, more alluring, just like—”

Annie paused as she noticed three outfits hanging on the laundry rack. The first two were the torn remains of Annie’s designer red dress and Ruby’s standard latex uniform. There was a sticky note attached to Annie’s dress with a note written in Vanille’s tight cursive: “Need to sew.”

But the third outfit could only be a second set of Ruby the Roussette's clothes, undamaged. It was identical to the first, with the exception that the latex was a lovely midnight purple instead of black. Mrs. Vanille had attached a sticky note to it with only one word: "Ugh!"

Annie swallowed. If only she had some of Ruby the Roussette's sultriness, could she really make Sonar the Needle-mouse fall in love with her?

As the washing machine started to hum behind her, Annie entered into a trance, and before she knew it, she was standing in front of the laundry room mirror, dressed in Ruby the Roussette's outfit, stroking her hips.

Now that Annie was just shy of eighteen-years-old, there could be no denying, she wasn't a little girl anymore. Annie had been worried Ruby's ample chest size would make the outfit too big for her, but the elastic material of the heart-shaped top fit snug, just like a sports bra.

Annie pressed the top into place, feeling how it fit snugly against her bosom. Is this what a guy like Sonar would want her to be? Annie felt half disgusted with herself, but she also had to admit that she could see the appeal.

***

Ruby the Roussette frowned as she trotted alongside Vanille the Hare. Vanille was wearing a pair of navy-blue overalls, which bore the brand-name "NINTENDON'T."

Ruby was dressed in one of Annie's older red dresses, and didn't look very happy about it. "But Mrs. Vanille, I don't need to borrow a dress. What's wrong with my spare uniform?"

Vanille clicked her tongue as she led Ruby by the hand. "Because your uniform is hardly appropriate for work attire."

"What do you mean? I wear it to work all the time. It's business casual."

"Perhaps it's considered acceptable for espionage work at G.L.O., but you're working for the community of Floral Forest village now, and *here* the business casual for ladies is a simple dress."

Ruby twisted to examine the seat of her mini skirt, and pouted as she tried to pull it down to cover her white bloomers (an unworn pair gifted to her by Vanille). "But the skirt is too short! People will totally be able to see my panties!"

Vanille paused, and examined Ruby's behind with a look of concern. "Hmm, good point. Everyone in the village has already seen you two stripped naked, spanked, and put in timeout. I'd hate for you girls to

suffer any additional embarrassment. Maybe you should wear black gym shorts? Those wouldn't be quite as noticeable. I think Annie might have a clean pair you could borrow."

***

Annie heard the laundry room door opening, and jolted, desperately trying to cover herself with both hands. The moment Annie turned, Vanille strode into the laundry room, beaming with delight. "Annie, guess what? You and Ruby are going to be matching... twinsies?"

Ruby's eyes popped open as she noticed Annie's stolen outfit, then she crossed her arms, scowling. "Hey! What gives?"

Annie dropped to her knees, and clutched her hands together. "Please don't spank me, Mrs. Vanille! *Waaah!"*

Vanille stood to her full height. "Annie Roza, stop that whining at once."

Annie pressed her lips shut, and nodded, her eyes still watery. "Yes, ma'am!"

Vanille sighed. "Now, let me hazard a guess. You spied Miss Ruby's uniform, and it piqued your curiosity. So you put it on, without asking for permission. Do I have the long and short of it?"

Annie hung her head. “Yes, ma’am. Guilty as charged.”

Ruby snorted. “Hmph! Maybe a spanking would teach you not to touch my things without asking.”

Annie’s lip quivered.

Vanille turned to look Ruby in the eye, and put a hand on her bare shoulder. “Hmm, an intriguing suggestion, Miss Ruby. Though, to be fair... I did dress you in Annie’s old dress, without asking her for permission. What do you think, do *we* deserve a spanking too?”

Ruby froze as she caught a glimpse of Vanille’s buck-toothed smile. Immediately, the thought of commanding Vanille to lie across her knee occurred to Ruby, but she thought better of it. “Well... I suppose I can forgive Annie for being a little curious. If I wasn’t me, I’d be jealous of my wardrobe too.”

Then, Ruby smirked, and spun a pirouette, the short red skirt flying up along with the motion. “You know what, I think I’ll keep this. I look hot in red. Then again, I look hot in anything.”

Vanille grimaced, and coughed. “Ahem! Thank you, Ruby. In that case, Annie, since Ruby is willing to forgive you, I see no need to administer a spanking. After all... I did tell you to get dressed. I never specified what you could—or shouldn’t—wear.”

Instantly, Annie's tears disappeared. "Really? I'm old enough I can wear this?"

Vanille's smile broadened. "Of course you may. In fact... I think you should wear it the entire time we're cleaning up this morning."

Annie blinked once. Then she blinked twice. Then she blinked thrice. "What?"

At that moment, Crème the Hare literally flew into the room, spinning a circle around Vanille and Ruby's heads, before coming down for a landing in the middle of the laundry room. Crème was dressed in a green blouse and orange skirt, which Annie recognized as one of her old outfits. "Ta da! Look, Annie, I'm finally big enough to fit into your old dress. We're all going to..."

Crème trailed off as she noticed Annie's strange wardrobe. "... wear funny clothes today."

***

Buddy the Fox, Barney the Quokka, and Honey the Squirrel sniggered as they watched the grainy footage of Annie and Ruby's spanking for the hundredth time on Buddy's flip phone.

Buddy's laugh grew more nervous. "Okay, dudes, we've had our fun, but... I kinda need my phone back."

Honey pushed his hand away, and doubled over with giggles, shaking her head. “No way! This is our shared bounty. I just gotta save this to my micro SD card, and we’re good to go.”

Barney gasped for air. “It’s just too bad we didn’t have a nice camera on us. Like my dad’s old camcorder.”

Honey froze, then pulled her SD card out of Buddy’s phone. With a smirk, she popped it into her own phone with a smirk. “Go on.”

Barney’s laughter died, and he glanced behind his back. “What? You want me to… No, bad idea, Honey. It’s a memento from my dad’s days in film school… He says they don’t make them anymore.”

Honey raised an eyebrow. “What kind of camera don’t they make anymore?”

Barney swallowed. “I dunno. You have to put these weird black case things in it. Dad calls ‘em… VHS tapes?”

Honey harrumphed, and roughly handed Buddy back his flip phone. “Hmph! I’ve heard of those. Probably not as good as a modern camera, but still… Much better than this. Well, what are you waiting for? Go get it, Barney!”

Barney bit his lip. “But... Dad said if I ever mess with his camera again, I’m gonna get knocked from here til Sunday!”

Honey tapped her foot. “I already got one spanking that you two should have been in on. You owe me one, remember? Barney, you’ll get the camera, and Buddy, you’ll be our camera man, just like for the first video.”

Buddy stiffened as he examined his phone. “Me? But, Honey, I don’t know if I can use that kind of camera.”

Honey shrugged, and flashed a toothy smile. “Nonsense. You got a steady shot of the first spanking, while Barney was giggling his head off. You’re a natural camera man!”

Buddy grit his teeth. “Well, maybe I don’t wanna do it! Maybe I don’t want to get in trouble!”

Nodding, Honey tapped her own phone. “Oh? You don’t want to get in trouble, huh? I completely sympathize! In that case...”

Honey flipped her phone, to reveal the finale of the damning spanking video, which ended with a still frame of Buddy and Barney examining the camera with glee. “... you better do *exactly* as I say. That is, if you don’t wanna get caught!”

***

Annie blushed furiously as she trotted along after the rest of the group. “But, Mrs. Vanille, don’t you want me and Ruby to be twinsies today?”

Vanille paused at the door, and patted Annie’s behind to usher her out the front door. “Nonsense! After all, you’re old enough to decide what you want to wear in public. Don’t you want to wear that... *daring* ensemble, Annie?”

Annie took a quick breath as she felt the pat across her behind, and skipped out the front door, covering her front. “Well sure, but—we’d be so cute together! I can just go change real quick. Really, it’s no trouble!”

Vanille stroked her chin. “Hmm. I don’t know. I *did* tell you to get dressed and ready for work. And we don’t have time to dawdle all day trying on different outfits...”

Ahead of them, Ruby and Crème paused and peeped over their shoulders to watch the proceedings. Ruby had a look of sly schadenfreude, while Crème had a look of sorrowful sympathy.

Vanille crossed her arms. “... So tell me, Annie, are you *perhaps* having second thoughts on whether you’re old enough to dress like that in public?”

Annie hunched her shoulders, then tried to stick out her chest to look more confident. “Well… no, that’s not what I meant. I’m plenty old enough to pick the clothes I wanna wear!”

But as Annie glanced down nervously, she noticed the hot-pink heart-shaped top again, and wasn’t so sure.

Vanille only stared, then took Annie by the elbow and led her along. “Then that settles it, I suppose. Come along, Miss Annelisa Roza. Chop chop. I want everyone to see how mature you two have decided to be!”

Annie clenched her jaw, then forced herself to chuckle as she was led along.

Ruby the Roussette skipped alongside them, holding a picnic basket. “Oh yes, Mrs. Vanille! I can’t wait to help repay our debt to society. And what will be our first order of duty?”

As they approached the front door of a neighboring cottage, Vanille smiled sweetly. “We’ll start with forest clean up. But I’ll have to borrow some equipment.”

Crème held up her own picnic basket. “Like folding chairs for our picnic?”

Saucer the Cosmo popped his head out of Crème's picnic basket, and chirped. "Chi, chi-chi?"

"Ah, yes, those too. Thank you for reminding me, Crème and Saucer."

Vanille rapped at the door, and a middle-aged, male quokka answered. "Howdy, Mrs. Vanille."

Mr. Quokka glanced absent-mindedly at Annie and Ruby, then did two double-takes in a row as he examined each of their unusual outfits.

Vanille cleared her throat. "Good morning, Mr. Quokka. Would you, perchance, still have that old chainsaw?"

***

In the dim, dusty interior of Mr. Quokka's storage garage, Buddy the Fox, Barney the Quokka, and Honey the Squirrel examined a collection of VHS tapes stacked in row after row on chipboard shelves. Honey's tiny toy flashlight acted as their only source of light. Barney rifled through a cardboard box, and produced a hefty camcorder. "Here it is! We'll just put it back when we're done. Dad will never know."

Buddy clasped his hands together. “Hypothetically, what would happen to us if he *did* know?

Barney swallowed. “You don’t wanna know.”

Honey peered closely at the camcorder. “Hold on, this thing needs a blank tape to record anything. I read that in a spy novel once.”

Barney fumbled with the buttons. “Um… but it’s empty?”

Honey pointed her light at the wall of VHS tapes, and grabbed one. “Then just stuff one of these in there.”

Barney clutched his skull. “Are you bonkers? If we do that, it will erase the previous recording!”

Buddy traced a finger along the endless rows of tapes. “Maybe there’s a blank one?”

“I don’t think so. Dad keeps complaining about how he can’t find another supplier since he bought up the backstock from that bankrupt video rental store… Blockbuster, or something.”

Honey furiously examined the tapes. “So we’ll just pick one out he won’t care about. Let’s see here… High school graduation, wedding day… birth of my first child? Ah, here we go, 1992 TV commercials.”

"No! Not Dad's priceless 1992 TV commercials! He says you can't get those anymore!"

Honey groaned. "Then you pick one, genius!"

Trembling, Barney grabbed a single tape. "W-w-well... maybe–"

There was a terrible, rusty groan as the back door opened, letting a thin strip of light stab across the floor. The kids caught their breath, and froze.

With heavy steps, Mr. Quokka plodded into the garage, and reached for a light cord on the ceiling. The incandescent lights flickered to life, clearly revealing the kids right behind Mr. Quokka, before the bulb stuttered and died. "Aw, what a load of–whatever. It's gotta be here somewhere... Ah, and here it is! My chainsaw! Oooh, I can't wait to see the looks on those trouble-making kids' faces! This will teach those juvenile delinquents some respect!"

Then, Mr. Quokka pulled a cord on the chainsaw, and with a stuttering, clicking roar, the motor rumbled to life.

Barney, Buddy, and Honey all jumped into each other's arms, screaming in unison as they knocked over a shelf of tapes.
*"Aaaaaaaaaah!"*

Mr. Quoakka yelped in surprise. *"Yaaargh!* Who's in here? I'll–"

But as Mr. Quokka swung up the chainsaw, the metal blade caught the lightbulb, and it exploded with a crack of electricity, sending sparks flying. Mr. Quokka danced in place as he was electrocuted, revealing his glowing skeleton for maximum Saturday-morning cartoony effect.

The kids ran around in a panic, knocking over shelf after shelf like dominos in their rush to the exit. Fortunately, the last bookshelf at the end of the domino path knocked into Mr. Quokka, knocking him free from the electric shock. As Mr. Quokka lay flat underneath the shelf and pile of tapes, his chainsaw slowly wound down. "... Ow."

***

Outside, Vanille, Crème, Ruby, and Annie overheard the muffled sounds of screams and crashing. Then, Mr. Quokka appeared at the door, his singed fur smoking slightly. "Here you are, Mrs. Vanille... Say, you didn't see anyone suspicious come running out the door, did ya? Like, thieves, or hoodlums, or government agents, or something?"

Ruby tightened her mouth at the mention of "government agents."

Vanille shook her head. “No, sir. We didn’t see anyone come out the front door.”

Mr. Quokka shrugged. “Eh, probably just some evil robots, snooping as usual. Anyway, here’s that chainsaw for ya, Mrs. Vanille. Keep it for as long as you need it!”

Crème grinned from ear to ear. “Thank you, kind neighbor!”

Vanille nodded as she carefully took the chainsaw. “Yes, your generosity is most appreciated, Mr. Quokka.”

Mr. Quokka rubbed his head. “Aw, shucks.”

As Vanille left with her crew, Mr. Quokka took one more curious look at Annie and Ruby, scratching his head. “Funny, I thought that government agents were only allowed to wear those skin-tight uniforms... Or was it that *only* government agents were allowed to wear those skin-tight uniforms? Well, either way, they’re a weird bunch.”

Mr. Quokka turned to find Barney, Buddy, and Honey, all sitting primly in little chairs around a kids’ table. “Say, what are you kids up to?”

All three kids screamed at once.

“We’re not up to anything!” howled Barney.

“We’re having a tea party!” yelped Honey, who was sitting on the priceless camcorder.

“We’re all criminals now!” screeched Buddy.

For a full five seconds, Mr. Quokka stared at the kids. “... Oh? That’s neat. Well, have fun, kiddos.”

***

The birds of Floral Forest were chirping merrily as Crème laid out her picnic blanket on a grassy knoll, humming to herself.

The felled trunk of a once-mighty oak tree lay strewn across the lovely walking path. Vanille carefully set down the chainsaw, and planted a foot on the trunk. “All right, ladies, today we will be learning proper safety protocols for arbor removal. Be sure to take careful notes.”

Annie tapped her pencil against her clipboard. “Um, aren’t we just supposed to hack it up with a chainsaw?”

“Don’t be absurd! Trees may be beautiful, but they’re also dangerous. Devious. Unpredictable.”

Ruby curled her mouth into a half-frown, half-smile. "Unpredictable? They're trees. What are they gonna' do? Jump on us?"

Vanille grabbed a nasty looking branch with a sharp twist of her wrist, snapped it clean from its tree limb. "One more crack like that, Ruby, and you'll be feeling a switch across your bare bottom. That will give you a *small* taste of just how bad a tree branch can hurt you... And Annie, remember to raise your hand if you have an important question. Capiche?"

Annie and Ruby snapped to attention, and held their pencils at the ready. "Yes, ma'am!"

Vanille slapped the stick against her own palm, like a drill instructor. "Very good! Then let us begin with the basic safety training. Ever seen a marshmallow stabbed on a stick? Well, if you don't want to end up like a marshmallow, we all have to be careful around these branches. Felling a tree can easily result in having a tree fall on you, if you don't know what you're doing. Even removing a downed tree entails risk, because it could roll or shift while we're pruning it. Yes, Crème, you have a question?"

Crème lowered her hand. "So that means that good boys and girls should *never* try this at home?"

"That's absolutely right, Crème!"

Saucer the Cosmo popped out of Crème's picnic basket, and waved one of his adorable paws, as if he was speaking through a camera to an invisible audience of kids watching Saturday morning cartoons at home. "Chi chi, chi! Chi Chi-chi chi chi, chi-chi-chi!" [Translation: "Yeah, kids. If you try this at home, you're an idiot!"]

Tentatively, Annie raised her hand, and waited for Vanille to nod approval before speaking. "So, this is sort of like a 3D puzzle? We have to figure out where the branch will go, before we cut it?"

Ruby grinned, and started to flap her lips. "Yeah, and–"

Then Ruby froze, clamped her mouth shut, and shot up her hand.

Vanille let the moment hang, then smiled. "Yes, Miss Ruby? You have a question?"

"Erm, we'll also need to make sure everyone else is clear of the tree, before we make a cut, right?

Vanille nodded. "Correct. Though I'll be the only one handling the chainsaw, at least for the first few cuts. If you girls are good listeners today, I'll teach you both how to use it. But if either of you disobey my instructions, to the letter, or if there's *any* fighting today... what can you expect to get?"

Annie and Ruby both pumped their fists into the air, with enthusiastic energy, and cheered at once. “A bare-bottomed spanking!”

Vanille whipped the branch across her own palm. “You girls are such fast learners!”

***

Behind a nearby tree, Buddy, Barney, and Honey listened with intense interest. Honey held up the stolen camcorder. “All right, troops, this is it. Hand me the tape.”

Barney blinked. “What tape?”

“The tape you said you’d get, duh.”

“You mean before my dad went all chainsaw massacre on us? I didn’t have time to find a tape!”

Buddy fumbled with his glasses, and pulled out a VHS tape labeled with a hand-written note. “Um, I grabbed this one by accident in the confusion. I was too scared to drop it.”

Barney peered over Buddy’s shoulder. “What? That could be anything! What if it’s one my Dad’s irreplaceable treasures?”

Honey snatched the tape, and read the words aloud. “Sonar OVA OST, master recording, 1996? Eh, he’ll probably never miss it.”

As Honey stuffed the tape into the camcorder and pressed the record button, Barney ran his fingers through his fur. “But, but–”

“But, and, or, lights, camera, action!”

Through the viewfinder, Honey saw Vanille, Annie, and Ruby putting on goggles and industrial earmuffs. With a squirrelish smile, Honey adjusted the focus, aiming right at Annie and Ruby’s rear ends, all perfectly framed in her camera shot.

***

After carefully pruning the first few minor branches, working from the base of the tree and moving toward the top, Vanille instructed the girls each in turn on the use of the chainsaw. “Very good, Miss Ruby. Once we’re finished limbing, we’ll move on to bucking the tree.”

Ruby snapped her head up. “We’re *whating* the tree?”

Annie held up her hand. “Um, pardon me, Mrs. Vanille. But what is whating?”

"*Bucking* the tree, Miss Roza. We'll chop the trunk into manageable-sized chunks. Now, stand back, Miss Ruby. It's Annie's turn with the chainsaw."

Ruby nodded politely, and carefully stepped back. "Yes, ma'am."

Vanille sighed with content. "You girls have done an excellent job listening so far. Keep this up, and we might actually get through the whole morning without anyone getting a... spanking?"

Narrowing her eyes, Vanille caught a glimpse of a red camera light behind a tree... and a squirrel's tail. "Girls, stay calm. But I do believe we're being watched."

Annie started to turn to look behind her, but caught herself. "Is it Walrusman?"

Unfortunately, she didn't catch herself in time before Ruby elbowed her sharply in the shoulder. "Hey! Act natural, airhead!"

Annie tensed, then clutched her shoulder. "I was acting natural! You act natural!"

Vanille wagged a finger. "Stop that bickering, right this instant, both of you. I don't think it's Dr. Walrusman. Probably not one of his robots either, unless he's started building ones that look like a few miscreants from the local peanut gallery."

Crème daintily sipped at a pink plastic tea cup, carefully avoiding looking at the tree. "Oooh, I spy, with my little eye, a squirrel tail. Probably Honey. I do like her, but she can be a bit of a snoop."

Vanille sniffed. "Is that so? Ah, and there's a fox tail, probably Buddy, and there's... little Barney Quokka? I begin to see."

Annie stamped her foot. "They're playing Peeping Tom? Oooh! That makes me so mad! Let me handle this, Mrs. Vanille. One good bonk with my Whacka-Mo Hammer will teach them to never–"

Ruby pulled Annie's Whacka-Mo Hammer from behind her back. "You mean this heavy boy?"

"What? The Whacka-Mo Hammer is not a boy, she's a mighty tool of—wait—why do *you* have my Whacka-Mo Hammer?"

"I dunno. I guess it came with the costume."

"But that's not fair! It's my Whacka-Mo Hammer! Give it back!"

"You have my iron boots, don't you? Those are my weapons."

"But only one with a pure heart can properly wield the Whacka-Mo Hammer! ... Hold on, how are you even able to lift it?"

With an effort, Ruby spun the hefty hammer in her hands, feeling its ponderable weight. “Girl’s gotta keep in shape if she wants to go toe-to-toe with that red-head chuckle-head. This whack-a-mole toy of yours is a bit more brutish than what I’m used to, but I think I can handle it.”

“Butish? I wield it with the strength of my love! There’s nothing brutish about true love!”

Vanille put her hands on her hips. “Girls, that’s quite enough. Do you need a spanking to convince you to stop bickering?”

Annie and Ruby both stood at attention. “No, ma’am!”

“Then perhaps we can settle this disagreement like polite young women. Now, I’m no fighter, but I don’t think extreme violence will be necessary to deal with a few errant youngsters. Any suggestions?”

Crème put away her plastic tea cup, and stroked her chin. “Hmm... we could always try one of the old, reliable, wascally wabbit tricks!”

***

Honey the Squirrel sniggered as she watched the proceedings from afar. “Eh, heh! They’re having some kind of argument. Mrs. Vanille’s bound to start spanking them any second now. Okay, Buddy, you’re up!”

Misunderstanding the comment, Buddy the Fox looked to Barney with a sneaky grin, before he suddenly remembered he was the one who had so foolishly chosen "Buddy" to be his cool new nickname a month ago. "Me? Why me?"

Honey thrust the camcorder into Buddy the Fox's trembling, white-gloved hands. "You're our designated camera man, remember?"

"But I got the shakes!"

Honey clapped Buddy sharply across the back, "I believe in you. Go get 'em, Rookie!"

Buddy's eyes popped from the force of the encouraging slap, then he smiled weakly, "Oh? Um, thanks, I *do* like 'Rookie' better as my nickname, now that you mention–"

There was a dense, thunderous crash, and all three kids bounced as the ground shook beneath them. Buddy peeped from behind the tree, and caught a shot of Annie Roza somersaulting backwards to escape from Ruby the Roussette, who swung the Whacka-Mo Hammer with enough force to cause a small earthquake with each impact.

Ruby the Roussette elegantly spun a pirouette to deliver a horizontal spin attack, followed by a second trembling vertical blow, which left a crater in the ground where Annie had been standing only a moment before. “That’s it, Annie Roza! I’m turning you into a pancake!”

Annie delivered a stunning flying butterfly kick to deflect an incoming stroke, then followed up with a running jump side kick, her stiletto high heel aimed at Ruby’s face. Ruby ducked backwards to evade the kick, then spun the handle of the Whacka-Mo Hammer to force Annie to retreat.

Annie landed acrobatically, then spun to point at her opponent. “I’ll get you, Ruby! You stole my hammer!”

Ruby planted the butt of the hammer into the ground before her. “So what? You stole my look!”

Annie answered with another series of taekwondo kicks. “Oh yeah? Well your fighting style is weak!”

Ruby blocked and swung wildly. “At least I *have* style!”

Annie vaulted out of the way, then rolled into a spiky ball for a follow up bounce attack. “Sure you do. You stole my outfit after all!”

Vanille clapped her hands sharply. “Young ladies! That’s quite enough! Think of the example you’re setting for Crème and Saucer!”

Crème laughed maniacally. “Mwa, ha, ha! I’ve just decided that when I grow up, I want to be a bad guy, and fight *everybody* all the time! Just like my two favorite role models, Miss Annie and Miss Ruby! Let’s go fight people, Mister Saucer!”

Mr. Saucer popped out of Crème’s picnic basket, wearing a black top hat and handlebar mustache taped to his lip, chortling with wicked, cosmic malevolence. “Chi, chi chi!”

Crème held up her hand. “Cosmo Supiningu Atakku!”

On command, Mr. Saucer went flying in a spinning ball of adorable doom, aimed right at Annie and Ruby.

Ruby unfurled her leathery wings and tried to fly to safety. But then, the heavy head of Annie’s Whacka-Mo Hammer stopped her mid-flight. “Yikes!”

Mr. Saucer slammed forcefully into the handle of the hammer, knocking it out of Ruby’s hands, before returning to Crème’s hand like a falcon.

Annie gasped. “My precious Whacka-Mo Hammer? Crème! Saucer! How could you? That does it! From now on, I am no longer your unofficial big sister. I am officially declaring myself your unofficial, big-bad-*evil* sister!”

Annie snatched up her hammer, and delivered a wild running downward smash attack, aimed at Crème and Saucer. “Hanmā Kōgeki!”

Crème fluttered her long ears to fly gracefully out of the way, and seemed to glide along the grass before pivoting. “Sandā Shūto!”

Crème spun backwards, and launched Mr. Saucer with a kick that sent him shooting at Annie.

Annie squealed as she saw the incoming tackle. “No! I’m too young and pretty to die!”

Then, there was a soft rush of wind, and Ruby the Roussette came gliding in to gracefully intercept Mr. Saucer. She landed lightly, and held up a struggling Mr. Saucer with a single hand. “Oh, please. You girls think you’re bad? I’m O.G. Team Dark. This is your weapon? Well, I think he’s simply adorable. You’re a whittle cutie pie! Yes you are! Coochie-coochie, coo!”

Mr. Saucer tried to protest, before erupting into giggles. “Chi Chi? Chi, chi chi-chi—Chi?! Chiiii! Chi-chi-chi! Cha-cha-cha!”

[Translation: “Cutie pie? I’m pure evil! I’m—Ah! Noooo! Don’t tickle my tummy! Ah, ha ha!”]

Crème squeaked. “No! You not planning to use… the tickle torture? Not on poor Mr. Saucer!”

Ruby cradled Mr. Saucer gently against her ample chest, and laughed behind her hand, almost as if she was referencing a cheesy anime villainess. “Fu fu fu! What a devious idea! I’m so glad I thought of it.”

Annie clutched tight to her hammer. “You fiendish vampire bat! Unhand him!”

Ruby bounced Mr. Saucer lightly in hands. Already, he seemed to have forgotten he was a hostage. Then she started tickling his little footies. “Surrender now, or Mr. Saucer will get the full, ‘This Little Piggy Went to Market’ treatment!”

Annie lowered her hammer, and posed melodramatically, hiding her face in despair. “It’s… it’s so over! We’ve lost this battle, Crème! Ruby is just way too good at being bad!”

Crème clutched her hands together. “All right, Miss Ruby, you win! Just please—oh please—don’t hurt Mr. Saucer!”

Ruby paused the tickling, and curled her lips. “Hmm, in that case... I demand your unconditional and immediate surrender. Annie Roza, I’ll have that hammer, *and* my iron boots back, thank you. And I think a little *punishment* might be in order. Specifically, a spanking!”

Annie froze. “Um... a spanking? What, as in, *you* spanking *me*?”

Behind the tree, Barney, Buddy, and Honey all poked their heads out a bit further.

Crème held her hands behind her back, and kicked a pebble. “Uh oh... are you going to spank me too, Miss Ruby?”

Ruby shook her head, then caught a glimpse of Mrs. Vanille. “Oh, not to worry, Little Miss Crème. You were foolish to challenge me, but you are also young. Your mother, on the other hand, might benefit from a good spanking.”

Ruby flashed her most alluring bedroom eyes at Mrs. Vanille. “Well, what do you say, Vanille? Will you accept my terms, to save your precious Mr. Saucer?”

Then, Ruby blinked, and in that brief instant, Mrs. Vanille seemed to teleport immediately in front of Ruby’s face, her eyes shining with mad, maternal menace. Then, Vanille lightly pinched Ruby by the ear, and gently retrieved Mr. Saucer from Ruby’s frozen hands.

"Okay, that's quite enough nonsense. Good girls aren't supposed to fight each other. All three of you have just earned yourselves a right, good spanking."

Behind the tree, Barney, Buddy, and Honey all sucked down a breath. This was it!

Then, Vanille strode over to pinch Annie by her ear. "And Annie, you're old enough to know better. Since you and Ruby have already been warned about fighting, both of you are getting a switching, as an extra punishment... across your *bare* bottoms!"

Annie's lip quivered. "B-b-bare? B-b-but–"

Vanille interrupted. "But, of course!"

Ruby grit her teeth. "B-b-but, why does it have to be on our b-b-bare b-b-bottoms?"

Vanille imitated Ruby's stutter. "B-b-because, a proper switch can cut through fabric. Now, I expect you to fetch your own switch. No, not those twigs from the dead tree. You'll need to cut a fresh, green branch... I think a weeping willow would be most suitable."

Slowly, Barney, Buddy, and Honey all looked up. Sure enough, they were hiding behind a weeping willow tree.

Vanille released her hold on Annie and Ruby's ears, and produced a pocket knife from her overall pocket. "Yes, *that tree.* Both of you, march straight over there, and be sure to cut off a nice, thick switch. At least the width of your finger. And at least ten of those, so I have plenty of spares for each of you."

Barney and Buddy glanced up, and saw hundreds of switches matching that description, plenty for all of them and to spare. Barney grabbed Buddy by the shoulders and whispered. "We're dead!"

Buddy glanced back and forth from Barney to his camera. "We gotta run! We gotta hide... Honey?"

There seemed to be an invisible, cartoon dotted line marking the place where Honey the Squirrel had been standing only a moment before.

***

Breathing hard, Honey sprinted through the woodland, until she was forced to rest on a tree, clutching her sides.
"Just—gotta—get—outta—this—forest—"

Then, Crème and Saucer dropped down from the sky, landing right beside the terrified squirrel girl. Honey screeched so loud, it sent a

flock of birds flying high above the forest canopy, where the scream echoed all the way across Floral Forest.

As Honey lay on the ground, Crème smiled sweetly. “Why hello, Honey. Are we playing hide-and-go-seek? I certainly hope so. I always win that game!”

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After Honey was escorted back to the site of the fallen oak tree, the three spying youngsters stood in a line in front of Mrs. Vanille, the camcorder resting on a tree stump between them. Annie and Ruby both clutched a bundle of switches, with smug looks on their faces. Now that they were no longer the ones in trouble, the prospect of a spanking was much less stressful.

Vanille tapped her foot. “Well, well, fancy meeting you here. Are you all just enjoying a lovely stroll today?”

“Yes!” yelped Barney.

“No!” wailed Buddy.

“Filming!” gasped Honey.

Vanille opened her eyes, with a half-lidded glance. “Filming? Why, yes, I suppose that does explain the camcorder... And what kind of footage were you hoping to get?”

“Birds!” squealed Barney.

“Criminals!” cried Buddy.

“Documentary!” howled Honey.

Crème cocked her head to the side. “Fascinating. A bird-criminal documentary, you say? How creative! I’ve never heard of a movie like that.”

Honey gestured to the camcorder. “It’s a documentary on the crime of littering and its impact on the bird population! For school!”

Vanille whistled softly. “Phew! That sounds like quite a project. Did Mister Stewart assign that as your social studies homework?”

Honey bit her lip, cursing herself for her slip of the tongue. “Um... it’s more like an extra-curricular project, for extra credit... because we care?”

Vanille nodded. “How ambitious. I suppose you were planning to interview some of the adults around town, to get their perspective?”

Honey nodded furiously. “Yeah!”

Barney gave a meager thumbs up. “Definitely!”

Buddy buried his face in his hands, sobbing. “Noooooooooo!”

Vanille patted Buddy on the head. “Hmm... well, if I were you, I’d start by talking to your parents. I’m sure they’d love to hear about *everything* you’ve been up to. And if you’re ever curious to find out exactly what happens to criminals in Floral Forest Village...”

Crouching low, Vanille looked them each in the eye. “... just ask your parents to bring you over to my place for a visit. I’ll be happy to straighten you out!”

With that, Vanille stood to her full height. “Now, be off with you. Run along.”

Honey bolted. Buddy and Barney ran into each other, before following her. Barney paused, then doubled back to retrieve the camcorder.

As Annie watched the kids go, she noticed the bundle of switches in her hand, and her smile vanished. “Um... you’re not *really* going to spank us again, are you, Mrs. Vanille?”

Vanille giggled. “Of course not, Annie, darling. We were only playing pretend, after all!”

Then, with a swish and a *thwick*, Vanille snapped a green willow branch across her palm. “... But let’s be sure to bring home these switches. Who knows? They might come in handy.”

End of Chapter V

# Chapter VI: Cosmic Self-Control

It was a long morning of hard, sweaty work. Under Vanille's guidance, Annie Roza and Ruby the Roussette pruned most of the dead oak tree, though the path Floral Forest Village remained blocked by the heartwood.

They took a short break for a picnic lunch. Annie winced as she sat down on the picnic blanket, and looked out over the damaged trees in the grove. "Shoot, Ruby and I really did a number on the trees in this part of the woods, didn't we?"

Vanille took a dainty sip of water. "Yes, Annie, I'm afraid you did."

Crème sighed as she examined the chopped remains of the old oak tree. "Some of those trees were over a hundred years old."

Vanille nodded. "I hope that cleaning up this debris will teach you and Miss Ruby a lasting lesson about the damage your actions can cause."

Ruby raised an eyebrow. "Though it was really Berylin's energy blasts that did most of the lumberjack work."

Vanille snapped her head to face Ruby, and patted her lap ominously. “Energy blasts which were fired in self-defense. Do you perhaps wish to *relitigate* your case, Miss Ruby?”

Ruby stared at Vanille’s lap. “No, ma’am. I’m ready to do my community service. No arguments.”

“A wise decision. I’d like us to at least clear the path this afternoon, then we should head home and prepare dinner for the Freedom Fighters before evening.”

Annie hung her head. “Mrs. Vanille… do you think my parents will be mad at me, when they find out what I did?”

Vanille turned to look at Annie. “You haven’t called them yet? Of course, you’ve been so busy. One thing after another.”

Annie bit her lip. “But… do you think they’ll spank me? They always used to say if I ever got a spanking from Mrs. Vanille, I’d get another spanking from them, as soon as I got home.”

Vanille put a hand on Annie’s shoulder. “Well, Annie, that’s up to them. They may decide to spank you, but I’m sure if you’re genuinely repentant, and acknowledge what you did wrong, they will be fair with you. I think you should call them tonight, and talk to them about everything that has happened. I’m sure they’ll listen

to you, and give you a chance to give an account of yourself. You'll have time after dinner, when you're winding down for the night."

Ruby took a bite of her blood orange, savoring it. "Hmm... so a spanking at school means a spanking at home? Glad I never had to worry about that rule. I was homeschooled."

Vanille sniffed, and started to put everything back into the picnic basket. "Well, Miss Ruby, whether or not your mother decides to spank you, as long as you are staying under my roof, I'll ensure you have the proper guidance you've been needing."

Nervously, Ruby and Annie helped put away the picnic basket. Then, Annie stood, holding her head high. "Mrs. Vanille, seeing the damage I caused to this beautiful forest has got me thinking... and I've realized something important. I think, maybe, I ought to get a reminder spanking."

Ruby's ears twitched. "A *what-kinda* spanking?"

Vanille ignored Ruby, looking at Annie intently. "Are you sure, Annie dear? You've been behaving well so far... at least, since this morning."

Annie nodded, then bent to retrieve one of the green willow switches she and Ruby had cut earlier. With an effort, Annie handed it to Vanille, looking her in the eye. "Thank you, Ma'am, but the

more I think about what I did, the more I'm sure that just one spanking is far too merciful as a punishment for my wanton destruction of nature. I believe I deserve to be spanked every single day, for at least a week or two. Please, Mrs. Vanille, I want you to spank me again."

Vanille accepted the switch. "So be it. In that case, you will get a good reminder spanking. I'm so proud of you, Annie, darling."

Ruby flashed her bat fangs. "The hell's a reminder spanking?"

Crème gasped, and clapped her hands over her mouth. "You shouldn't use the H-E-double-hockey-sticks word! That's light profanity!"

Vanille tapped the willow switch against her thigh. "Miss Ruby, I have warned you about minding your tongue."

Ruby rolled her eyes. "Good grief! Fine! What in the ever-loving *inferno* is a reminder spanking?"

Vanille swung the switch against her open palm with a sharp snap, and squeezed the stick. "You're about to find out, first hand. I think Miss Roza's idea to reinforce the lesson we've been learning is an excellent suggestion. So you will be joining her. It's time you got a taste of the switch across your naughty, bare bat bum!"

Ruby's pupils shrank to pin pricks, before she clutched her white-panty-clad bottom. "Huh? But I'm being a good girl! I've been obeying you all morning!"

"You may have been obedient in your rote actions, but your attitude is in serious need of an adjustment. You might recall our little discussion about what it means to submit in obedience? Or do you need another visit to the woodshed to remind you of our agreement?"

Ruby stiffened, then dropped her hands to stand at attention. "No, ma'am! I'll obey!"

Vanille smiled gently. "Good girl. In that case, let's get this little reminder spanking taken care of. Both of you, drop your britches, march straight to that log, and assume the position. Rest your hands on the log, and stick out your backsides to prepare for your switching."

Automatically, Annie dropped her skin tight, dark-purple pants, while Ruby fumbled to find the waistband of the white panties under her red mini skirt.

Both girls looked like they were severely regretting their choice to switch outfits today. With their garments around their ankles, both Annie and Ruby were forced to scootch awkwardly toward the log. Annie approached the log from the left, while Ruby was on the

right. Ruby scowled, and muttered under her breath. “A reminder spanking? Great idea! Thanks a lot, Annie!”

Annie pressed her lips into a tight frown, and grumbled through gritted teeth. “Hey, I just wanted to take some accountability. You got yourself into this fix, bat-brain!”

Vanille flicked the switch lightly against their behinds, with two quick little taps. “None of that bickering! When it’s time for two naughty, silly little girls to get a good spanking, they should be seen, and not heard. Bottoms up, ladies! Right now!”

Both Annie and Ruby squeaked in unison. “Yes, Mrs. Vanille!”

Immediately, both girls slapped their hands against the log and arched their backs to present their quivering, bare buttockses.

Vanille sighed with relief, then winked at Crème, who giggled. Even for a mother as authoritative as Vanille, three girls were a lot for one woman to wrangle. “That’s more like it. Since this is a reminder spanking, I think it would be worth reflecting on our misfortunes from yesterday. I want both of you to put your thinking caps on, and answer my questions. Annie, let’s start with you...”

As Vanille addressed Annie, she approached Ruby from the right, and tapped the switch across both of their bottoms at once, so the tip of the switch touched against Annie’s left butt cheek. “Yesterday,

you girls earned four separate spankings—not counting your additional bedtime spanking—for four separate offenses. What was the first thing you did wrong, which got you into trouble to begin with?"

Annie was already thinking of the answer as she saw the littered debris scattered across the forest grove. "I went on a foolish escapade, hurt poor Mister Berylin, and got into a big squabble with Ruby."

Vanille whipped the switch across both girl's bottoms at once. Both girls yelped, but Annie gasped with keen surprise as she felt the tingling aftershock, right where the tip of the switch had landed against her left buttock.

Slowly, Vanille strolled behind the girls to approach Annie's left side, and tapped the switch across their bottoms, this time resting the tip against Ruby's far right buttock. "Correct, Miss Roza. That foolhardy fighting earned you girls your first spanking. Ruby, you're next. What did *you* do that earned you a second round of spanking in the woodshed?"

Ruby hissed, struggling to catch her breath and stay composed. "I just *had* to be a smart ah... I mean, I ran my smart mouth. I was obstinate, and defiant, ma'am."

Vanille responded with a second stroke of the switch, and when Ruby felt the tip of the switch impact her right buttock, she squealed at a high, bat-echolocation-level pitch, almost beyond the range of the human ear.

Vanille let the moment hang, until Ruby's screech finished echoing, and began to stroll back to her original position. "Very well articulated, Miss Ruby. Both of you earned a second spanking, along with bare bottoms, for deliberate disobedience. As I warned you, you were both due a bedtime spanking already, and a bare bottom usually remains bare until the spanking is completely over. Nevertheless, I chose to show mercy, and allow you girls to cover your bottoms, so as not to add any needless embarrassment to your predicament. Miss Roza? It's your turn. What earned you your third spanking yesterday, during tea time?"

Annie flinched as she felt the tip of the switch, and started to snivel, her voice starting to choke. Tears of remorse were already budding against her eyelashes. "We... started fighting again. Right... right after... you told us not to!"

Annie screamed as she felt the brunt of the third stroke of the switch, like a thin line ripping across her helpless hindquarters. Ruby gagged, then bit her lip hard. Vanille tapped her foot a few times, then started marching back to their left side. "I'm afraid so. You willfully misbehaved, in public. Therefore, I chose to correct you in public. The neighbors might have guessed that you girls had a

spanking coming, but you at least would have been granted the dignity of being spanked in private."

In answer, both Annie and Ruby made whining, whimpering sounds of sorrow, before Vanille tapped them both across their behinds with the switch, aiming the tip against Ruby's right buttock. "No whining allowed. Miss Ruby, you're up. In the kitchen, both you and Annie earned a fourth spanking. What did you do to earn it?"

"I burnt the cake because I'm a bad... a bad cook!"

The fourth stroke of the switch came crashing down, and both girls' eyes popped open. Annie's knees nearly buckled, before she steadied herself, but Ruby strained her back as she reared back her head and screeched. "Aaiieeeeee!"

Vanille hummed, and tapped the switch gently across their bottoms, brushing the tip against the angry red welts left by the last two strokes. "And that's four. But could you perhaps be a bit more specific, Miss Ruby?"

Ruby gulped for air, her voice shaky, as two tears spilled down her cheeks. "I... I wasn't paying attention! Aaaw! I'm a bad girl! I'm a bad, bad, bat-girl! *Baw! Aauu!"*

As she heard Ruby breaking down next to her, Annie felt the dam starting to break, and let her own tears fall freely in thick, wet trickles. “And I was sassy, back-talking brat! I’m sorry, Mrs. Vanille! Ah… I’m so, so, sorry! *Aaw! Wuuaaaaah!”*

Vanille strolled to Ruby’s right side, and started tapping the switch again, more firmly this time, and aimed across their upper thighs. “Chin up, ladies. Now’s not the time for tears. You’re big girls, and I want you to keep your wits about you. I still haven’t decided how long your reminder spanking is going to be, so until we finish this discussion, I expect proper answers to my questions. Miss Ruby, how does it feel, knowing that everyone in Floral Forest village has seen you girls get a good, hard spanking? Right on your naughty, naked little bottoms? Did that make you feel like a strong, independent woman?”

Ruby started to whinge, before she felt the love taps of the switch, and checked herself. “No, Vanille!”

Vanille kept up the steady pattern of love taps across both their bottoms. “And Annie, did you enjoy being put in timeout in front of everybody, like a misbehaving child?”

Annie’s voice fluttered as she caught her breath. “No, Mama, no!”

Vanille felt her heart swell as she heard Annie’s slip of the tongue, but she kept her voice firm. “What about the company we are having

over tonight? Both Mister Taylor, and Mister Duster are planning to attend…"

At the mention of Duster's name, Ruby's ears twitched, and she caught her breath.

Vanille kept on tapping at a soft, steady pace. "… No doubt, Mister Sonar will join as well. Annie Roza, am I going to have to give you another bare bottom spanking, in front of all your closest friends?"

Tap, tap, tap.

Annie shook her head. "No, Mom—ah—no, ma'am! I'll be good!"

Vanille hummed theatrically. "Hmm. Miss Ruby, what would you prefer? Would you like to finish this reminder spanking early? Or–"

"Yes! Finish it, please!"

Vanille cut off Ruby with a firm tap of the switch, before brushing it lightly along one of Ruby's angry welts. "Hold on, young lady, I *wasn't* finished. What I mean to ask is, which is better? Would you rather get a reminder spanking, right now, before our guests arrive, to help you remember to behave yourself? Or would you rather risk forgetting yourself, and earning a harder, bare-bottom spanking later, with all of them watching?"

Vanille's ears drooped as she considered the question. "Um... both options sound bad, ma'am?"

*Tap, tap, tap...*

"An astute observation, Miss Ruby. But consider this: I understand your former comrade-in-arms, Mister Terios the Needle-mouse, will be joining us for dinner tonight. It seems he's finally accepted his invitation to join the Freedom Fighters. Now, let's suppose that you *forget* to behave like a lady tonight, and earn yourself *another* bare-bottom spanking... Then by the rules of the house, you can expect to keep your bare bottom on display, for the rest of the night. Imagine having to serve dinner while wearing an apron, and nothing else. How does that sound to you? Good, or bad?"

"Uh... sounds bad, ma'am?"

Vanille lowered the switch, looking Ruby in the eye. "Annie asked for this spanking of her own free will, to act as a reminder for her. I'm satisfied you're ready to fix your attitude, Ruby, so now it's your turn to choose. Do you wish to stop your reminder spanking now, before I finish with Miss Roza? Or would you like me to give you the reminder spanking she's getting, to help you *not forget* to behave?"

Ruby swallowed, and felt her throat going dry. "I... want to behave, ma'am."

“And do you need a spanking to help you remember to behave?”

Ruby forced a smile. “I–ah–sure hope not?”

Then, Ruby’s red miniskirt flopped down, covering her drooping tail, which was literally hanging between her legs.

Vanille let the moment hang. “It’s not a trick question, Ruby. I’m giving you the chance to back out from this spanking. Or you can get a little reminder, along with Annie.”

Ruby looked into Vanille’s calm eyes, then reached back to lift up her own skirt, fully exposing her bottom again. “Well, when you put it like that, I guess a little reminder couldn’t hurt. Ya know—the carrot and stick treatment?”

“Speak plainly, Miss Ruby. Say what it is you want me to do, out loud.”

Ruby placed her hands on the log. “... Please, give me a spanking, Mrs. Vanille. I want the same as what Annie gets.”

Vanille nodded, and finally delivered the fifth stroke of the switch. Unfortunately, although Ruby wanted to get the same treatment as Annie, it was Annie who got the short end of the stick, meaning the

tip of the switch across her left buttock. As Annie wailed, Vanille strolled behind them.

"And what about you, Annie? Are you experiencing any buyer's remorse?"

Annie groaned, feeling the last four welts stretch as she tensed her glutes. "It's... no fun getting spanked. But I think I need it, to really help the lesson stick with me. Maybe not a *whole lot* more spanking, but... I need more than a few love taps. You're always so fair-minded, Mrs. Vanille. I trust you to decide how long my spanking should be. So... please, finish spanking me, ma'am."

Vanille took a deep breath, and flashed a buck-toothed smile. "Aw! You're both such sweet young ladies. I can't stay mad at you. In that case..."

With precise force, Vanille snapped the switch across their bottoms, aiming the tip at Ruby's right buttock. Ruby roared as she felt it leave a fresh, throbbing welt at the point of impact.

"There! That should do for a little reminder spanking. Six stripes in total. That's rather fitting. Did you know, they used to refer to a caning as 'six of the best instructors,' because six was the standard number of strokes teachers used to give to their students. Isn't that simply fascinating?"

Annie and Ruby blinked, as anime sweat beads trickled down their foreheads. Ruby licked her lips. "Uh... Wow? School rocks."

Annie smiled meekly. "Thank you for spanking us, Mrs. Vanille. We won't let you down."

"I know you won't, Annie. Up you get, girls. You may get redressed. Would anyone like a hug?"

Forgetting to pull up her spandex pants, Annie rushed to hug Vanille, before Ruby approached tentatively, whistling as she pulled her panties back up across her glowing behind. Annie sniffled, then pulled Ruby roughly into the group hug.

Crème cheered. "Yay! Spanking is over! I know I didn't get a spanking, but can I have a hug, too?"

Ruby beckoned with her fingers. "Get over here, *Crèmesicle*. The more the merrier."

Crème squeaked with glee, then flew to hug Annie and Ruby. Unfortunately, since Crème was so short, that meant she accidentally brushed her arm across both Annie and Ruby's sore behinds. As they both felt a twinge, Annie and Ruby sucked down a breath. Crème pulled back. "Oops, sorry!"

Annie exhaled, then smiled. "It's okay. Sometimes love hurts."

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Annie winced as she felt her hindquarters twinge. “Good grief... The switch really leaves a mark. I can barely walk in this condition.”

Flapping her leathery wings, Ruby fluttered alongside Annie, flashing a lazy smile as she spun around in midair. “Does it? Imagine that!”

“Do you have to rub it in, Ruby?”

Ruby hummed theatrically. “I thought we weren’t allowed to rub after a spanking.”

Crème bounced on her heels, raising her hand. “Ooh! Excuse me, but that’s not quite right. We’re not allowed to cover our bottoms *during* a spanking.”

Vanille patted Crème on her head. “That’s exactly correct, Crème. And since the reminder spanking is officially over, both of you girls may attempt to rub away any lingering stinging... If you think it will help.”

Instantly, Annie and Ruby both clutched their butt-cheeks with both hands, massaging furiously. “Oh, thank you, thank you, *thaaank you!*”

Annie paused as she spotted the thatched roofs and chimneys of Floral Forest village, and dropped her hands demurely, glancing down at her immodest outfit. “Um… Mrs. Vanille, I’ve been thinking… about this borrowed outfit? Will I have to serve Sonar, wearing nothing but this?”

Vanille shook her head. “Of course not. You should wear an apron, to protect yourself against spills.”

Ruby’s ear twitched, and she peered out of the corner of her eye with undisguised amusement at Annie’s predicament. Annie’s face flushed beet red, and she covered her chest. “But… isn’t this outfit a little… immodest for polite company?”

“Did you think it was immodest when you tried it on, without asking?”

Annie hung her head. “I regret doing that. It wasn’t very polite of me.”

Vanille nodded. “I’m glad to see you’ve been reflecting on the matter. Miss Ruby has already forgiven you for the matter, so I think you’ve been punished enough. Of course you may change into another outfit, Annie. You’re old enough to decide what you want to wear, after all.”

Annie's face brightened, and she hugged Vanille tight. "Really, I am? Oh, thank you, thank you, *thaaank you!*"

Ruby landed gracefully next to them, pinching the hem of her red skirt. "So that means I can change out of this Sunday school getup, right? After all, if Annie's old enough to dress the way she wants, I certainly have to be. I'm older than her!"

Vanille glared at Ruby. "This is a formal dinner, Miss Ruby. And you're technically not a member of the original Freedom Fighters."

"Yeah, but I've done plenty of espionage work for Princess Susie. She likes me."

"Still, since you are attending as *my* guest, perhaps you should consider wearing something a little more *discreet?*"

Ruby gestured at her ample bosom, which Annie's dress did little to disguise. "As a master spy, I think I've learned all I need to know about discretion."

Vanille smiled, and wrapped an arm around Ruby's waist, forcing her to walk alongside her at a brisk pace. "Very good. In that case, I will trust you to choose something appropriate to wear..." Vanille patted Ruby playfully across her sore bottom. "... So let's avoid anything that's unnecessarily *embarrassing* tonight. Do we have a deal?"

Ruby tensed as she felt her fresh welts throbbing madly at the slightest touch. “You got a deal, Mrs. Vanille!”

Using her ears to fly, Crème fluttered alongside them, pouting cutely. “Mommy, if it’s all right with you, may I wear my new outfit to dinner tonight?”

“I don’t mind, but since it’s Annie’s dress, I believe it’s her decision.”

Annie, who had been deep in thought, suddenly snapped to attention, noticed Crème, and smiled. “Huh? That old thing? Sure, Crème, you’re welcome to keep it forever!”

Crème spun in mid air. “Yay! Thank you, Annie. Orange is still my favorite color, but I think this shade of green is simply lovely!”

Vanille giggled. “Then all that’s left is to drop by the woodshed and–oh–fear not, ladies! I’m not planning to spank you again. Just need to pick up a few spare... chairs?”

Vanille trailed off as they approached the woodshed, and heard the sounds of crisp, echoing slaps. It was unmistakably a spanking in progress... No, multiple spankings all at once.

The door of the shed had been propped wide open, and in front of it, three of Vanille's neighbors had seated themselves on wooden stools. Instantly, Annie recognized Mr. Quokka from earlier that morning.

Then, Annie finally put two and two together.

Barney the Quokka, Buddy the Fox, and Honey the Squirrel were all bent over their parents' knees, bawling, blubbering, and ballyhooing their way through a blistering, bare-bottomed beat-down. Mr. Quokka was busy paddling his son, appropriately, with a small hand paddle. He looked up when he noticed Vanille approaching, but didn't pause the ongoing spanking. "Oh, good afternoon, Mrs. Vanille. I hope you don't mind, but we had to make use of your woodshed. Family emergency, you see!"

Buddy's mother, Mrs. Fox, nodded as she used a sturdy wooden hairbrush to punish her son. "You wouldn't believe it! We were just discussing with Mr. and Mrs. Squirrel about scheduling use of the woodshed, when who should come charging in but these hooligans? Yelling that they needed to confess their crimes!"

Mr. and Mrs. Squirrel were taking turns spanking their daughter. They were in perfect synch, though while Mrs. Squirrel wielded a hefty wooden spoon, Mr. Squirrel used only his hand.

Mrs. Squirrel hummed, thoughtfully. “Hmm... and I already spanked Honey only yesterday. I hope you don’t mind, Mrs. Vanille, but some on-the-spot discipline was called for. And since the woodshed is a bit cozy for seven, we decided to get this taken care of in the open, right here and now. Lovely day to deal with a few young naer-do-wells, isn’t it?”

Vanille shared a knowing look with the girls, before turning back to watch the spanking in progress with calm approval. “It most certainly is. And what crimes might they have plead guilty to?”

Mr. Squirrel puffed his cheeks, then popped his daughter one across her bright-red bottom, just below her bright-red squirrel tail. “Stealing! Can you believe it? They ran off with Mr. Quokka’s antique camcorder!”

Mr. Quokka harrumphed, then landed another firm wallop across his son’s tail. “And they scuffed up the casing! You’d better hope you didn’t break it, buster! Jostling it like that. That camcorder’s a memento from film school!”

In response, Barney, Buddy, and Honey all howled various combinations of apologies, pleas, and promises to be good, before their parents all landed another spank in unison.

Annie glanced at the camcorder. “Any idea what they were filming?”

Mrs. Fox sighed. “Oh, some sort of documentary, apparently. A school project, I think? We haven’t quite had time to interrogate them properly.”

Barney made a howling noise that trailed off into a sob.

Mr. Quokka grumbled. “Oh, don’t worry, I’ll find out. I want to know exactly what was so important they thought it was a good idea to record over one of my prized VHS tapes. Some of those are at risk of becoming lost media!”

Mr. Squirrel gasped. “Disrespecting historical artefacts? The very idea!”

Mrs. Squirrel clicked her tongue. “Tsk, tsk. Don’t worry, Mrs. Vanille, I promise we’ll get to the bottom of this. On a related note, would you mind if I reserved the woodshed from three to four o’clock for the next week or two? I’m afraid our little trouble-making tomboy has lost herself the privilege of sitting down comfortably for a good long while. I’m sorry, Mrs. Fox. I’m sure Honey was the ring-leader in all this mischief.”

Honey the Squirrel shook her head wildly, before a particularly hard set of whacks landed in a one-two combo, and she broke down completely, crying her heart out.

Mrs. Fox beamed. “Oh, my boy may look innocent, but he can be a scheming little fox if I let him. Still, he’s such a sensitive soul. I think he’s quite sorry already. Aren’t you, dear?”

By this point, Buddy the Fox was whimpering, tears and snot and drool dribbling down his face.

Mr. Quokka’s ears stood up. “Say, why don’t we all make this a daily meet up? If we spank them at three o’ clock every day, that will keep the woodshed open for other parents in need… for their children in need of a spanking.”

At this news, Barney the Quokka started to stammer incoherently, before a resounding whack of the hairbrush cut him off entirely.

Mrs. Fox giggled. “How considerate. That’s an excellent suggestion. Since these three like getting into trouble together, it’s only fitting that they get spanked together, too.”

Mr. Squirrel examined his daughter’s upturned bottom sagely. “Of course… we’d still have to spank them outside the woodshed, for all the world to see.”

Mrs. Squirrel clicked her teeth. “Yes. Though to be honest, I think Honey’s probably the most likely culprit to tease other children about getting spankings. But she’ll soon be cured of that habit, won’t you, Honey?”

In contrast to the two boys, who seemed to have given themselves over to mindless panic, Honey was weeping softly, as if with tears of genuine remorse. “Yes, Mommy, I promise, I’ll be a good girl from now on! I’ve learned my lesson! Honest!”

Mr. Squirrel harrumphed. “Nice try, but I know crocodile tears when I hear ‘em. Hamming it up won’t convince me to wrap up this spanking early.”

Honey dropped her hands from her face to reveal perfectly dry eyes, shaking her fists as she struggled to lift herself. “Hey! I’m no ham actor! I’m a thespian!”

But when Mr. Squirrel landed the next ferocious spank, Honey howled, and flopped back down across her parents laps, real tears springing to her eyes.

*“Apparently, she’s a method actor,”* thought Annie Roza.

Vanille bowed her head, then gestured toward her house. “Of course, you’re welcome to use my woodshed as often as you need. Good luck children. Can’t wait to hear more about your documentary on the crime of littering, and its effect on the local bird population.”

As they approached Vanille's house, they could overhear the sounds of all three members of the trouble-making trio howling and wailing, before their final, desperate attempts to explain themselves melted into unrelenting sobs.

It was a cacophony of castigation! The tumult of tears! The din of despair!

Crème glanced behind her shoulder one final time, with pity in her eyes. "Gosh, Mother... will you ever have to spank me like that?"

Vanille kissed cream on the top of her head, and closed the door behind them, cutting off the horrible sounds. "Of course not, Crème. You may make mistakes from time to time, and require correction. But you're much too well-behaved to ever merit a spanking like that. Now, to business. Annie, dear? Ruby, darling? Go get changed at once, please."

Annie and Ruby both answered politely, curtsied, and hustled up the stairs. In their bedroom, they peeped through the window, and spotted their former tormentors below, still suffering through their ongoing torment. The triple-spanking session had paused, but only long enough for the parents to exchange implements, and start round two.

As Ruby gracefully stripped off Annie's red dress, she smiled at the sight. "Deserved."

Annie almost tripped as she stepped out of Ruby's skin-tight, purple spandex. With a sigh of relief, Annie put her arm around Ruby's shoulder. "For once, we can agree, Brat-girl! Those snots deserve a spanking almost as much as you do."

Ruby clapped Annie playfully across her bright pink posterior. "Whatever you say, Little Miss Bubblegum!

Annie stiffened, then glared at Ruby furiously, clenching her fists. "Could you not? I *really* don't want to earn another spanking for decking you.

Ruby smiled softly. "Not even if *Sonar* gets a front row seat to watch it?"

Suddenly remembering she was naked, Annie tensed her shoulders, blushing as she covered her bottom. "No! Especially not while he's—I mean—not while our friends are here!

Then, Annie relaxed, and held out a hand. "So, what do you say we make peace? I'm not saying we have to be besties, just... a truce of sorts?"

Ruby examined Annie's hand, then yawned, and stretched her arms, letting her bare breasts bounce beautifully. Suddenly, Ruby grabbed Annie by the shoulders and lightly kissed the stunned Needle-mouse

twice, once on either side of her face. Finally, Ruby reached around to pat Annie's bottom playfully. "You've got a deal, Annie Roza."

Annie noticed she was still sticking her hand out awkwardly. Not knowing what else to do, she returned Ruby's gentle embrace, and softly petted Ruby's bottom in return.

End of Chapter VI

## Chapter VII: Live and Learn the Hard Way

Vanille whistled a gentle tune to herself, before her ears perked up at the sound of footsteps. “Oh, my! You look lovely, Annie, dear.”

Crème giggled. “That’s a pretty classy outfit, Annie. I love the fanny pack. So practical.”

Annie beamed, and spun a pirouette. She had donned her magenta button-up dress, with a white sash. “Thanks! I haven’t worn this little number since my playwright's retreat at Seaside Island.”

Crème blinked. “You wrote a stage play? So, what’s the plot?”

“Ah yes, *A Rose Without Thorns!* It’s a sordid romance, about a pair of young, first-true-lovers destined to–”

Abruptly, Vanille cleared her throat. “Ahem! And Miss Ruby? Is she ready to help us... cook?”

Ruby dropped down from the ceiling, landing with a theatrical flourish. “Ta da! How’s this for a knockout?”

There was a long pause as they all took in the sight of Ruby. She was wearing a purple sports coat with white bellbottoms and matching

high-heels. But because she was only wearing a black, strapless bandeau underneath, Ruby's midriff was left exposed.

Crème giggled. "I can see your belly button!"

Vanille sighed softly. "That's... not too bad for a formal dinner actually. But I think you forgot the shirt."

Ruby looked down at her toned, tanned tummy. "What? But that would throw off the color coordination. The black top ties together my belt and bat wings."

Vanille took a long, sharp breath through her nose. "It's a little casual, but... I suppose it is summer, after all. And you'll have an apron too."

Ruby's eyes popped open, and her bountiful breasts seemed to deflate slightly. "Oh, yeah... We're still on serving duty tonight."

Vanille put a hand on each of their shoulders. "Miss Annie, Miss Ruby, I just want to say... I'm very proud of you girls for agreeing to take responsibility for what you did, and working so hard to make things right. It's only your first day, but I believe you've both shown an immense improvement in your behavior and attitude. So, with that in mind..."

Vanille reached down and patted both girls on their seats. “Let’s all try our best to have a pleasant dinner with our friends tonight. Agreed?”

Annie and Ruby both nodded, and returned Vanille’s hug. “Yes, ma’am.”

Crème flew into view, wearing her mother’s overly large, “Kiss the Cook!” apron. “Then let’s get cooking, Mama!”

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They started with dessert: Annie had made her personal favorite strawberry shortcake, Crème had prepared a peppermint candy cake especially for Taylor, while Vanille had made her prize-winning carrot-upside-down cake. Ruby had struggled with cake-baking, and so settled on preparing a fruit bowl with extra grapes for Duster the Spiny-mole.

Vanille started a pot of chilli slow-cooking. Annie tossed a salad with nuts, while Ruby volunteered to man the grill.

Ruby whistled as she set down the first tray of jumbo-frank-style hot dogs. “I’d better put on a pot of coffee, too. Terios always likes a plain cup o’ joe, black as night.”

Vanille hummed. “How sweet! You’ve really gotten to know Mr. Terios well over the years, haven’t you?”

Ruby hummed. “Yeah, we always seem to end up on the same squad whenever there’s trouble. You know, people tend to assume that Terios is a moody, dour bad-boy, but when you get to know him in person, he’s really nothing like that at all. Everyone just got the wrong idea of him because of the whole Eclipse Cannon incident.”

Crème set down her mint cake, and looked at Ruby with skepticism. “You mean when you, Mr. Terios, and Dr. Mechanik exploded half the moon?”

Ruby made a whistling sort of noise through her nose, and flashed her fangs in a big smile. “That happened while I was acting as an *undercover agent* to infiltrate Walrusman’s terrorist operation.”

Annie nodded. “I remember that day. Even with Sonar leading us, I was afraid we weren’t going to make it, until Terios had his change of heart. You’re right, Ruby. I don’t think he ever wanted to be a bad guy in the first place. He just needed... to remember who he was supposed to be.”

Ruby nodded, with a strangely proud look in her eye. “Yes, yes. It was a very dramatic affair, with him laying down his life to save the world. Falling to his doom from outer space and all. Then there was the whole amnesia thing where we weren’t sure if he was an android

or not, and that whole deal about his dad being a weird, alien, devil-dude trying to corrupt his spirit. But I gotta' say, Terios has really conquered his demons."

Crème rested her chin on her hands. "Miss Ruby, do you have a crush on Mister Terios?"

Ruby blushed. "Of course not! Terios is like a brother to me is all!"

Annie shrugged. "Yeah. Besides, Mister Duster is the one who she's always playing footsie with."

"Dusty and I do not play *footsie!* We simply have a shared interest in kick-boxing martial arts techniques! ... And he has a pretty good eye for gemology, now that I think about it."

Crème started singing. "Miss Ruby and Duster-or-Terios, sitting in a tree... K-I-S-S-I-N-G! First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes a baby in a baby carriage!"

Vanille set down her tray, and glared at Crème. "That's quite enough, Crème. That kind of teasing is unbecoming of a young lady. And girls who tease... wind up over knees. Understood?"

Crème's ears drooped. "Yes, ma'am. I'm sorry for teasing you, Miss Ruby."

Ruby shrugged. “Eh, no harm, no foul.”

Crème turned to Vanille, shuffling her feet. “And I’m sorry for being rude, Mother. Do you think I need a reminder spanking, to help me remember to be more ladylike?”

Vanille patted Crème on the head. “I forgive you, Crème. What do you think, Crème? Do you need a reminder spanking today?”

Crème played with the hem of her skirt. “I think… I can remember to mind my manners, without the spanking.”

Vanille kissed Crème on the nose. “Then I don’t think you need a reminder spanking either. Just remember to mind your manners at dinner tonight.”

Crème returned the kiss. “I will. And if I forget to remember, please remember to spank me… for forgetting. Do we have a deal?”

Vanille hugged Crème. “We have a deal, my sweet-cream. Now, let’s serve the table. Our guests should be arriving any minute now.”

Annie puffed her pink hair-quills out of her eyes. “Sonar will be fashionably late, as usual.”

Crème giggled. “Yes, but knowing Auntie Bonnie, she and Anthonus will be fashionably early, as usual.”

Vanille frowned as she peeked out the window. “I hope they make good time. There’s a storm brewing. I’d hate for Berylin to rust.”

Vanille pulled Annie and Ruby aside, and whispered in their ears. “Annie, Ruby, I’d like you both to stand back and serve the other guests as they arrive. Don’t worry, I’ll keep two seats open for you both at the foot of the table. Then, after everyone is served, I’ll introduce you as my guests, and invite you to sit.”

Ruby narrowed her eyes. “Introduce us? But I’ve met Princess Susie before.”

“Yes, but since you were not invited to this get-together by Princess Susie, that means you are here as my private houseguests. It’s proper custom when welcoming royalty to introduce you to the table, even if you already know each other.”

Annie tapped her index fingers together. “Do you think... Princess Susie will be upset to see us here?”

“Oh, I’m sure she’ll understand. You know Princess Susie doesn’t care much for courtly procedure, but I like to cross the t’s and dot the i’s anyway when it comes to good manners.”

Annie swallowed a dry lump in her throat. It wasn’t the royal manners she was worried about. It was seeing Susie herself. *“What if*

*I forget to behave myself in front of all these people? What if I spill something on her? What if they ask what I'm doing here? I'll have to tell the truth, right? Oh no, I'm gonna get spanked for sure!"* thought Annie.

Then, the door bell rang. Sure enough, it was Bonnie "the Cyborg-Hare" d'Chacal. The moment Vanille opened the door, Bonnie burst in and pulled her into a rough bearhug. "Howdy, sugarcube."

Anthonus d'Chacal fixed his pristine hair as he strolled in meekly, and kissed Vanille lightly on both cheeks. He twitched his long, jackal nose, then flashed a disarming smile. "Bonjour, Madame Vanille. I hope we are not *too*—how you say—fashionably early, non?"

Vanille beamed, then returned Anthonus's light kisses. "You're always welcome, and you're always fashionable, Anthonus."

Bonnie hummed. "Woah, coz. Kissing my husband? Now you've gone and made me jealous. C'mere."

Bonnie kissed Vanille full on the lips, then kissed her husband likewise. "There. That's a country-style welcome."

Bonnie spotted Annie Roza, and broke free of the embrace. As she strode across the room, Bonnie's robotic prosthetic limbs whirred softly.

When Dr. Mechanik had tried to roboticize them as children years ago, Bonnie had been rescued only after losing her left arm and both her legs to the machine. "Annie, hon? So you got an invite? Finally! I've been saying for years you're more'n ready to be promoted to leadership on the Freedom Fighters."

Annie choked as she immediately realized the awkwardness of her situation. "Oh, no, I haven't exactly been invited here as a Freedom Fighter... I just happened to be staying as a guest at Vanille's house this week. She and my parents go way back, you see."

Bonnie blinked. "Oh? Well, we're mighty pleased to have you!"

Annie clutched her arm. A dark thought crossed her mind. *"If Princess Susie heard about how I tried to go after a Cosmic Gemstone..."*

After the disastrous incident with the magic Ring of Apricorn, Princess Susie had flatly refused to allow Annie to join the Freedom Fighters.

Instead, to Annie's complete emotional devastation, she had been sent back to her old middle school, while still trapped in the body of

a teenager. After they had partially undone the curse of the ring, Susie had waited a full two years to offer Annie junior membership as a Freedom Fighter, and yet another two years before promoting Annie to the status of full membership.

Annie tried to force a smile. “I’m happy to serve. Care for a bit of carrot-upside-down cake?”

They passed a few minutes amiably. Anthonus told his old war story about that one time he’d saved Sonar the Needle-mouse’s life, which most of them had heard at least a hundred times. But they didn’t mind. Somehow, Anthonus’s war stories always brought new, unexpected plot twists with each retelling.

The doorbell rang again. This time, Ruby flew to answer it. “I’ll get it!”

She flung open the door to reveal the stern, straight figure of Terios the Needle-mouse. At a casual glance, he bore a striking resemblance to the famed hero Sonar, but Terios had dark, black quills, and was equally dark of countenance.

Curiously, he was dressed in a jet black suit, with a red power tie. Behind him, black storm clouds were rumbling in the distance, and there was a crack of lightning. Terios’ voice was low, and menacing. “Good evening. Thank you for inviting me to your home.”

He took a second look at Ruby. “Ruby? What are you doing in Vanille’s house? You’re not trying to steal from her, I hope.”

Ruby pouted. “What? Of course not! I’ll have you know… I’m here in Floral Forest for sight-seeing, and Vanille was kind enough to let me crash here!”

Slowly, Terios glanced left and right. There were less than a dozen small cottages in the entirety of Floral Forest village. “Sight seeing, are you? Funny, you never struck me as the type to vacation in a small town. I thought you preferred to tour big city art museums on your days off… *after* closing hours.”

Ruby puffed up her chest. “So what? I can’t *also* enjoy the rustic charms of a rural village? You should know me well enough by now to know I’m the type to hide a few surprises up my sleeve.”

Terios nodded. “Of course. It’s just that I never figured you were also the cozy, homemaker type. Nice apron, by the way. It suits you.”

Ruby’s face turned beet red, and she smoothed the apron across her bosom. “Thank you. I’d say I’m rocking it.”

Terios averted his gaze from Ruby’s breasts, and strode to the dining room table. “Mrs. Vanille, I apologize for my tardiness.”

Vanille glanced at the clock. “Oh, no need to worry. You’re not that late. It’s only one minute after six.”

“Precisely. We were delayed by a surprise attack from the Walrusman Empire on Cocoa Island.”

“Is Berylin all right?”

“Last I saw him, he was helping clear up the remnants of Dr. Mechanik’s forces. I had to hasten here to warn you… I’m afraid the others will be late as well. ”

Vanille beamed. “Thank you, Mister Terios. Won’t you join us?”

Crème patted the empty seat next to her. “I’m saving this seat for Mr. Taylor. But if you want, you can sit across from me, Mister Terios. You’re the guest of honor, so you may have the seat to the right of the head of the table.”

Terios nodded, and started pulling off his coat. As he did, he revealed a holstered pistol. Vanille’s ears stood on end. “Mr. Terios? You brought your firearm?”

Terios glanced down at the holstered weapon. “Of course. I came here directly from the battle.”

Vanille took a slow breath. “I’m a tad worried about having firearms around Crème.”

Terios nodded. “Of course, Vanille. That is a completely reasonable concern. Crème, listen carefully...”

Terios knelt beside Crème and pulled out his pistol, pointing it away from the table. “This is a firearm. Specifically, it is my Heckler and Koch USP Tactical model handgun, for concealed carry. Now, although it is true that firearms are an essential tool for self-defense, they are also dangerous, and should never be handled by children. Of course, I never leave my firearm unattended, but if you *ever* see a gun that’s been left out in the open, what should you do?”

Crème eyed the handgun with intense interest. “I know I should never touch it. I suppose I’d better tell an adult or a policeman if I see a gun, right, Mr. Terios?”

Terios nodded, then removed the clip from his handgun. “Exactly. You should only ever handle a gun after completing a certified firearms safety course. But just in case, it wouldn’t hurt for you to know the basics...”

With lightning reflexes, Terios opened the gun. “This is called the slide. While cleaning a gun, *after* you unload it, you should always rack the slide, just in case a bullet was left in the chamber. Even after you unload a gun, always treat a gun as if it *were* loaded. For

example, you must never point it at someone, not even as a joke. While handling a gun, keep the safety on, and keep your finger off the trigger. See how I'm holding it? This is called trigger discipline."

"Discipline? Isn't that like getting a spanking?"

"Not quite. Trigger discipline means you never touch the trigger, until you're ready to fire at the enemy in a self-defense situation. In that case, you want to aim the first two shots at the center of mass, then aim the third shot at the target's head. Just remember, 'Put two in the chest, the head for the rest.'"

Crème gasped with wide-eyed delight. "Wow! I had no idea guns were so cool!"

Vanille nodded curtly. "Yes, thank you, Mister Terios, I appreciate your concern. But do you think it would be possible for you to put that gun away somewhere safe?"

Terios nodded. "Of course. May I borrow your gun safe?"

Mrs. Vanille grimaced. "But I don't own a gun safe."

Terios narrowed his eyes. "That's unwise. It's best to have one to safely store your guns."

"But... I don't own any guns."

For one full second, Terios stared at Vanille. “I see. In that case, it would be best for me to keep it on my person at all times. Crème, here are a couple more safety tips. After performing routine maintenance, you should reload your gun.”

With a practiced motion, Terios racked the slide, then demonstrated his aiming technique. “Once loaded, remember to rack the slide to chamber a round, and keep it properly holstered. That way, you can shoot right away if you’re attacked right away. Some poorly-made guns carry greater risk of an accidental discharge, but I’ve never had this problem emerge with my Heckler and Koch, given proper maintenance. I’ll show you how to practice your quick-draw and fire technique at the gun range, once you’re old enough to take the safety course. But until then, you must *not* touch my firearms. Do you understand?”

Crème’s eyes shone with big, cartoony stars. “Yes, sir, Mister Terios! And, Mother? Don’t worry! I promise to never, ever touch a gun. Not until I’m old enough to take the firearm safety course!”

Vanille took a slow, trembling breath. “Thank you, Crème. I know you’ll keep your promise… Mr. Terios, why don’t we all have a seat, and tuck in?”

Carefully, Terios holstered his gun, then seated himself. He stared at the smorgasbord of chilli dogs, fruit salads, regular salads, and desserts. “But shouldn’t we wait for the others to arrive?”

Bonnie shrugged, and held up a plate of cake. “Aw, shucks, it’s your party ain’t it, hon? Sit down and have a slice of cake.”

Terios took the plate, staring at it, then set it down in front of him, without the slightest change of expression. “Thank you. I will wait to have my dessert until after I have finished the main course.”

Ruby sniffed, then leaned over to pour out a black coffee for Terios. “Oh, c’mon, handsome. Just this once, can’t we be a little bit... *bad?”*

A bolt of lightning cracked in the distance, illuminating Terios’ stoic face as he ignored Ruby’s breasts, which were hanging an inch from his nose. “No. For I have renounced the path of darkness and revenge. I have vowed to serve the people of this planet, as a righteous, dark knight. Therefore, no matter how tempting I find this delicious-looking slice of cake, I will wait until after supper, before I partake.”

Slowly, Terios took a sip of coffee. “Thank you for the coffee, Ruby. Perfect, as always.”

Suddenly, the door slammed open, revealing a group of shadowy figures, and with a crack of lightning, a red-eyed robot appeared inside the door. “I have returned!”

Just as she was about to take a sip of tea, Mrs. Vanille stiffened. “Mr. Berylin, you nearly made me jump out of my slippers. Please remember to ring the bell before entering, especially when we have guests.”

Berylin stepped into the light of the dining room, before hesitating. “My apologies, Mrs. Vanille. Updating ‘polite manners’ protocols. Running test session.”

The robot stepped right back out, and slammed the door behind him. Then, the door bell rang. Casually, Mrs. Vanille turned to her daughter. “Crème, would you answer that? I do believe it’s Mr. Berylin.”

“Yes, Mother!” Beaming, Crème fluttered to the front door, and opened it. “Good evening, Mister Berylin, we’re so glad you made it back home in time.”

Another crack of lightning illuminated Berylin from behind. “Good evening, Miss Crème. I am pleased to inform you that the Walrusman Empire’s forces have been completely routed! We have met the enemy, and we have emerged victorious! Also, I took the liberty of escorting some of our guests home. Downloading proper

procedure for courtly etiquette. Complete. May I present: Mr. Duster of Angel Island…"

Duster the Spiny-mole stomped into the room, wearing a poncho and a slick cowboy hat. "Well, Taylor, we made it. Despite your directions."

With a slurp, Ruby the bat took a sudden sip of coffee, then stuck out her tongue. "Ack! Hot!"

Berylin waved Duster in, then gestured to the next shadowy figure. "Mr. Kyrie 'Taylor's Metre of West Side Island…"

Taylor shuffled in behind Duster, then sneezed. "Achoo! Hey everyone! Pardon my sneeze. Got caught in the rain on the way over. Hope I didn't catch a cold."

Crème the Rabbit adjusted the empty seat next to her, careful to look at the ceiling. "Then I'd better pour you something hot to drink, right away! Have a seat, Mr. Taylor. Would you prefer coffee, tea, or hot cocoa?"

Taylor sniffed, and took his seat. "Oh? Thanks! Hot cocoa please. Do you have marshmallows?"

With a snap, Crème produced a steaming mug of hot cocoa, as if from nowhere. "And graham crackers with cinnamon!"

Taylor found his seat, and took a sip. “Wow, Just the way I like it! Thanks, Crème.”

Berylin gestured toward the door, which framed a single, silhouetted figure in a cloak. “And finally, may I present…”

Annie Roza stood straight to attention, holding a tray of chilli dogs in her trembling hands. *“Then this has to be Sonar!”* she thought. *“He’s gonna see me in an apron! Oh, gosh, which apron do I have on? It’s not the chilli dog cook-off champion one, is it?”*

Trembling, Annie stared at her chest, and saw she was wearing a plain, white apron. *“Phew! Well, it could be worse, I guess.”*

Then, Berylin bowed low, and stepped back from the door. “Princess Susie of the House of Apricorn!”

A final bolt of lightning cracked above their heads, and Princess Susie pulled back her hood to reveal herself. Casually, she brushed aside her dripping wet hair, and hung her cloak. “Good evening, Mrs. Vanille. We apologize for our late arrival. I’m afraid Sonar volunteered to stay behind to mop up a few stragglers, so he won’t be able to join us until later. Thank you for offering to host.”

Vanille and Crème both stood, and curtsied. Vanille bowed her head low, and gestured to the seat at the head of the table. “I am honored, your highness. You’re welcome to sit at the head of the table.”

Susie waved a hand, and grabbed the first seat at the foot of the table. “Thanks, Vanille, but there’s no need for that fru-fru stuff when we’re meeting on Freedom Fighter business. When I’m among friends, I’m just Susie.”

Vanille nodded. “Of course, Susie, dear. Also, I have a couple guests staying with me. I hope you won’t mind if they join us tonight? Annie and Ruby.”

Susie’s attention snapped to Annie. “Oh, you made it, Annie? That’s perfect. Here, have a seat next to me. I’d been meaning to speak with you about–”

As she finally noticed Ruby, Susie did a double take. “Ah—hello, Ruby. Haven’t seen you since we wrapped up the last hunt for the Cosmic Gemstones during the time-travel kerfuffle. I didn’t know you and Vanille… knew each other so well.”

Ruby forced a smile, then quickly poured Princess Susie a coffee. “Oh! Vanille and I go way back! She’s like… the big sister I never had!”

Taylor finished the last of his hot cocoa, leaving behind a chocolatey marshmallow mustache. “Huh, kind of like me and Sonar... except he’s like my big brother, not my big sister.”

Crème sighed, batting her eyelashes softly as she stared at Taylor. “Yeah... it’s nice to have someone looking out for you.”

Duster harrumphed as he took his seat, then stuffed an entire bunch of grapes in his mouth. “Let’s make this quick. I get nervous leaving the Master Gemstone unattended any longer than I have to.”

Saucer the Cosmo floated into view from behind Crème. “Chi, chi? Cho-cho-Chi?”

Duster waved a gloved fist. “Yes, Omocosmo is perfectly capable. I just don’t like leaving the poor guy alone on that island for too long. He gets lonely.”

Ruby leaned over to pour Duster a cup of coffee. “Nothing to worry, Big Red. It’s not like I’m going to steal the Master Gemstone if you’re away from it for more than two minutes.”

Duster slammed his fist against the table, sending his coffee cup wobbling dangerously. “You’d better not try it, bat-girl!”

Ruby sniffed, and mopped up the spill. “Careful, Dunderhead! That’s hot coffee! And I’d never dream of it. I have no interest in

stealing the Master Gemstone... Not unless I can snatch it from right under your nose, that is. Otherwise, what's the fun?"

Duster slammed his fist even harder, sending a ripple through the table. "Lady! I don't want to hit a woman if I don't have to, so don't make me have to!"

Ruby dusted off her bosom. "Huh. And here I thought you were a male feminist."

Duster jabbed a finger at Ruby. "I'm *not* a male feminist! I respect women! Walrusman's the only womanizing, male feminist pig I know!"

Taylor frowned. "Um, Duster, I think you mean 'male chauvinist pig'?"

Ruby shrugged, then slyly sat herself on the empty chair between Terios and Duster. "Eh. Both are pretty apt terms to describe Dr. Mechanik, if you ask me. At least Lex Luthor *pretended* to be a gentleman."

Terios scoffed. "Bah. Don't remind me of that bald, obsessive, egotistical, megalomaniac."

"Which one? Walrusman, or Luthor?"

"You know the one. What did you even see in him? Name one good thing about him."

"Well, he's stinking rich. So there's at least a few *billion* good things in his bank account."

Duster froze. "Hold on, Ruby! What are you doing in Mrs. Vanille's house, anyway? You're not planning to steal her Cosmic Gemstone, are you?"

Ruby grimaced. "Not at this precise moment, I'm not."

Terios glared at Ruby. "Then why are you here, exactly? Are you in some kind of trouble again?"

Ruby's eyes popped open. "Ahem! ... A girl's entitled to have a few secrets."

Ignoring the furious argument between Ruby, Duster, and Terios, Princess Susie leaned over to whisper in Annie's ear. "Annie, we need to have a serious discussion, regarding the Cosmic Gemstones."

Annie felt a shiver travel up her spine. This was it. Somehow, Princess Susie had heard all about her foolhardy escapades. "I'm so, so sorry, Princess Susie."

Susie raised an eyebrow. "Sorry for what?"

Annie hunched her shoulders. “For everything I did yesterday. I really messed up. I hope you can forgive me... for breaking your trust.”

“Annie, what are you–”

There was a crack of lightning, so close that the roar of thunder shook the roof. Everyone tensed as the lights flickered overhead. Slowly, the thunderclap faded to an echo, and the lights came back on.

Taylor shivered. “Ugh... lightning.”

Duster slammed both his fists against the table this time. “What’s keeping that blue screwball, anyway?”

Nervously, Taylor checked his wristwatch. “By my estimation, Sonar should have mopped up those last few Robo-Baddies ten times over by now!”

Clinging tight to Taylor’s arm, Crème quickly pulled back, her ears drooping. “It’s not safe for anyone to be out in this weather. Not even Mister Sonar.”

Then, the door bell rang.

Annie heard the sound reverberating against the back of her skull, as if she was underwater. Susie already knew Annie's secret. Now Sonar would know too. Slowly, Annie stood from her seat. It was time for her to face her final humiliation. "That must be him now. I'll get it."

Susie held Annie's hand. "Annie? Are you all right? You're a paler shade of pink than usual."

Annie felt tears budding in her eyes. No. Annie wasn't all right. She was a bad girl. She was nothing but trouble. "I... I'm not..."

Quickly, Vanille stood and strode to the foot of the table. "Annie, dear, you've had a long, tiring day. Have a seat. I'll see Sonar to his seat."

Shaking, Annie sat back down next to Susie. "Princess Susie, I know I screwed up. I know this isn't the right time, but... I have to know! Are you gonna kick me out of the Freedom Fighters for this?"

Susie furrowed her eyebrows. "Annie Roza, I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about. But if you have something you'd like to get off your chest, you can tell me. Don't be ashamed. Whatever it is, I promise I won't be angry."

Annie wiped her eyes. “Huh? You didn’t hear how I got in trouble again? But then, why were you so worried about the Cosmic Gemstones? What’s going–”

Vanille opened the door. A blue needle-mouse was standing at the entrance. He was wearing a black traveling cloak, and had a brown scarf wrapped tightly across his face. Gently, Vanille grabbed him by the wrist. “Sonar? Thank goodness, you made it! Come in, quickly, before you catch your death of–”

There was a crack of light, and Sonar the Needle-mouse’s face was briefly lit by the eerie light. But as she saw his eyes, Annie Roza instantly knew something was wrong.

Sonar’s eyes weren’t green. They were glowing bright red.

Annie screamed a warning, and leapt to her feet. “Vanille! Get down! That’s not–”

Sonar the Needle-mouse held up a Cosmic Gemstone, as blood red as his eyes, holding it an inch away from Vanille’s stunned face. He snarled, “Cosmic... Blast!”

There was a blinding flash of light, followed by a terrific explosion. Annie heard the sound of everyone behind her, screaming.

The last thing Annie Roza saw was a wall of red flames, engulfing Vanille and Sonar, before the blast ripped through the walls and roof of the Hare-family cottage.

Annie's entire world went black.

End of Chapter VII

# Chapter VIII: His World of Pain

A deep voice echoed through the darkness. “Cosmic... Control!”

Annie Roza found herself standing on the grass in the middle of Floral Forest Village’s center. She glanced around, and saw the other dinner guests, before she heard a second explosion. Then she turned, and saw Vanille and Crème’s house disintegrate in a pillar of red fire.

With a crackle of white lightning, Terios the Needle-mouse blinked into existence, cradling Ruby the Roussette in one arm. In his other hand, he clutched an opaque, yellow gem that vaguely resembled the golden Cosmic Gemstone. Then, Terios stumbled to his knees, his black suit in tatters. “Saved... everyone... That blue needle-mouse...”

There was a blue blur, and with a sonic boom, the blue needle-mouse with the red eyes crashed into Terios, clotheslining him.

Ruby tumbled to the ground as Terios was sent spiraling and rolling, before he came crashing to a halt into the front wall of the cottage on the opposite side of the street.

The blue needle-mouse seemed to blink out of existence, before reappearing directly in front of Terios’ prone body, holding up the

red Cosmic Gemstone to aim it directly at his downed enemy's chest.

Annie saw Duster gliding through the air over her head. At the last moment before the blue needle-mouse could unleash another blast of red chaos energy, Duster dove down, slamming his fists together to create a burst of red energy, and slammed his fist into the ground where the blue needle-mouse had been standing. It left an impact crater, but the blue needle-mouse was nowhere to be seen.

Taylor flew into the air, and called down. "He's trying to pick us off! Everybody, get back-to-back, before–"

Annie felt a rush of wind as the blue blur whipped past her face, and used a flying spin dash attack to slam into Berylin's chest. The robot caught the spinning blue ball of doom before it could rip a hole through him, but the force of the impact sent him flying backwards and crashing onto his back.

They slid at least a hundred feet along gravel before Berylin managed to kick out from under the blue needle-mouse. Taylor dove down and snatched up Berylin by the arm to help him roll back to his feet. At that moment, the blue blur made a tight turn around a lamp post, and made a second charge at them, emerging from its ball form.

As Taylor carried Berylin back to the central group, the robot fired a quick blast with his arm cannon, but the blue needle-mouse was already gone.

Vanille's neighbors were starting to open their windows and doors, panic building as the citizens of Floral Forest Village gradually discovered the danger.

Duster carried Terios' limp body back to the central group. "Circle up, you idiots!"

Susie stood to her full height, and touched each of the pale-blue rings on her wrist. With a crackle of glowing, blue-white energy, two Ring-Blades materialized on the backs of her hands. "You heard him, everyone! Protect the injured! Eyes up for his next charge!"

Annie looked around her. Ruby looked like she was dazed. Vanille was lying flat on the ground, silent, her eyes closed. Crème was cradling her mother's head in her lap, her eyes wide. "... Mother? What happened to you, Mommy? Wake up!"

Bonnie the Cyborg-Hare knelt beside Crème and Vanille, shielding them with her robotic left arm. "It's all right, shug! I've got you both covered. Everything's gonna be okay!"

Something like a jagged streak of blue lightning twisted through the group, aiming at the unconscious body of Vanille the Rabbit.

Crème screamed, before the blue force slammed into Bonnie the Cyborg-Hare's left side. For a moment, it looked like Crème and Bonnie simply vanished, before Annie saw them come rolling to a halt in the gravel, away from the group.

Bonnie was still cradling Crème in her arms, but her robotic arm was dented so badly, it was nearly falling off at the elbow.

Anthonus d'Chacal spun on his heels, drawing his sword. *"Ma chèrie!"*

Annie felt her feet starting to move on their own. "Bonnie, get back!"

Bonnie hopped to her feet, and handed Crème off to Annie, her left arm hanging on by a few loose wires. "Annie, hon, you gotta take Crème for me."

Anthonus appeared by his wife's side, holding his sword aloft as he glanced around wildly.

Then, just as Annie took Crème in her arms, something snatched Bonnie away from them, carrying her by the twisted remains of her left arm.

The blue needle-mouse spun Bonnie in a circle, before her left arm snapped off and she went flying into the remains of Mrs. Vanille's

woodshed. This seemed to catch the blue needle-mouse off guard. It stumbled for a moment, holding up the twisted scrap of metal that was once a working arm, and casually tossed it aside.

Anthonus snarled, and made a lunging thrust at the blue needle-mouse. *"Scélérat bleu!* You dare to lay hands on my wife? She was unarmed, you—you—*babare! En garde!"*

The blue needle-mouse dove forward, past the tip of Anthonus's sword, caught him by the arm, and decked him in the stomach. Anthonus choked, before the blue needle-mouse spun him in a circle, whipping his cloak like a matador's cape, and physically threw the stunned jackal toward the woodshed.

Anthonus landed hard on his back, and came rolling to a halt beside the unconscious Bonnie. The husband and wife both lay still, as if sharing a tender embrace in their sleep.

Then, the blue needle-mouse tossed the sword aside and whipped off the black traveler's cloak, staring Annie right in the eyes as he revealed himself.

Annie felt her breath go cold. There could be no doubt. It wasn't one of Sonar's copycats, like Scourge or Metal Sonar. It wasn't a robot at all. Except for the red eyes, it was Sonar the Needle-mouse.

*Her* Sonar.

He was wearing the same cocky smile she'd seen a thousand times before, whenever he was helping people. Then, Annie blinked, and Sonar was gone.

Shivering, Annie retreated back to the group, holding Crème. "It's Sonar!"

Terios choked, then noticed he was being carried like a small child in another man's arms. "Put me down! I'm fine! I'm the only one here who can keep up with him!"

Duster snarled. "Shut up! Whatever that thing is, it's not Sonar. Not even *he* can move like that."

Terios held up his opaque gem. "He's using the power of Cosmic Control! I saw it myself when–"

The moment that Duster set Terios back on his feet, there was a snap like a whip crack, and Sonar appeared in mid air, landing a flying jump side kick right at Duster' face. With a roar, the red spiny-mole was knocked through the air, away the circle formation, before the force of Sonar's kick slammed him down into the dirt, face-first.

Duster swung a wild haymaker, but Sonar vanished, and Duster's punch pulverized the sidewalk pavement. He stood, spitting out

mud and gravel. “Sonar! That was a cheap shot! Come out and fight, you runt!”

Sonar blinked into existence behind Duster, landing a stylish butterfly kick to the back of the red spiny-mole’s dreadlocked noggin. The moment that Duster stumbled forward, Sonar disappeared, then reappeared in front of him, and pulled Duster forward into a judo throw. Duster roared as he was flipped forward, then gasped as he landed hard on his back, knocking the wind out of him.

Casually, Sonar cricked his neck, twice.

Taylor flew down between Duster and Sonar. “Sonar! Stop this! What’s happened to you?”

There was a sound of hooting laughter from above them. “Oh, come now, Taylee, I’m disappointed...”

Dr. Ivo Julius “Walrusman” Mechanik appeared from the sky, piloting his armored Tusk-o-Matic hovercraft. Walrusman twisted his mustache. “Use that engineer’s brain of yours. Surely you can figure it out!”

Duster groaned, and tried to stand, supporting himself on his knees. “Walrusman? I should have known you were behind this.”

Walrusman made a "zip your lip" motion with his hand. "Shush, Dusty, old chum! The three-digit-IQ-havers are talking."

Susie put up her dukes, gritting her teeth. "It's a trick! The eyes are wrong. That's just some new robot model, like the Terios Androids. Or you dressed up Metal Sonar in new armor."

Walrusman sneered, and punched his thumb and fingers together with a look of wild glee. "Ah, a creative suggestion, Princess Susie. But I'm afraid you're rather off the mark. You see, when I originally built the Hyper Metal Sonar Mark 1, I designed it specifically to kill the real Sonar. But over the years, my thinking has... evolved, you might say!"

Walrusman snapped his fingers, and a shining blue shape dropped out of the sky, landing next to Sonar. It was Metal Sonar, their old, familiar foe who had gone toe-to-toe with Sonar countless times.

It stood to its full height, side-by-side with the real Sonar. Then, Metal Sonar held up its arm, and revealed a second Cosmic Gemstone clutched in its sharp, steel fingers. It was bright gold, like Terios' false emerald, but more brilliant in color, and perfectly clear.

Walrusman gestured at Metal Sonar with a look of disappointment on his face. "Don't get me wrong, I'm still quite nostalgic for this old design. But the Metal Sonar project has been a constant

disappointment, ever since the initial launch. It's failed to kill Sonar so many times, I got to thinking, why don't I simply..."

Walrusman gestured to Sonar, beaming with undisguised pride. "... *persuade* Sonar to join the Walrusman Empire? Why rely on a cheap copy of Sonar, when I can have the genuine article as my obedient slave?"

Annie held a hand to her mouth. "Then must have found another of the Ancient Relics, like the Cacophonous Conch. Something that allows you to put Sonar under mind-control."

"Bah! Old world magic? You're as romantic as always, Annie Roza. You know full well I won't stoop to using superstitious mumbo-jumbo unless it's the only possible way to achieve a higher goal: to advance the cause of science itself!"

Susie stood in front of Annie, holding her blades in a defensive guard position. "That didn't stop you from enslaving yourself to Nagus, when you tried to roboticize our people!"

Walrusman's mustache bristled. "An unfortunate strategic necessity. You're getting warmer, Princess Susie, but still off the mark, I'm afraid."

Taylor looked at the Cosmic Gemstones in horror. “No... Dr. Mechanik, you didn’t! You’re trying to manipulate Cosmic energy again?”

Walrusman clapped his hands. “Bravo, my boy! You figured it out! But really, think about it. All science is simply a form of ‘manipulation.’”

Taylor waved his hands. “Are you insane? The Cosmic Gemstones exist beyond the laws of physics in our space-time continuity. They’re not things! They’re each a self-contained singularity! We can’t just... hack into them!”

Walrusman gestured at the dull, yellow emerald in Terios’ hand. “Oh, Kyrie Metre, you’re such a hypocrite. *You* were the one who inspired the whole idea! I remembered your cute little trick with that fake Cosmic Gemstone.”

“But it never worked like a real one! All the fake Cosmic Gemstone does is act as a temporary channel for true Cosmic Power. My gemstone’s just a high-capacity battery! A decoy!”

Walrusman held up his hands. “That’s the problem! You still think like an engineer, Taylee, not a true scientist. You invent things because you think they will be *useful*... because you want to help your little friends. But you never stop to ask... what is this which my hands have wrought? Just how far can I go with this idea? *You*

proved that the structure of a Cosmic Gemstone can be artificially reconstructed. And it got me to thinking: if it can be done once, why not do it again? But this time, I was determined to be more... *systematic* about it..."

Ironically, Walrusman twirled his mustache, unironically. "When you called it 'hacking' you weren't far off the mark. The Cosmic Gemstones work by manipulating the laws of probability. So, all I had to do was set up a few thousand A.I. datacenters, and let them get to work on cracking the code for me. Once you understand how the laws of probability function at higher levels, the 'magic' of the Cosmic Gemstones simply becomes something that can be analyzed with the scientific method. In the past, we've used the Cosmic Gemstones like nuclear batteries. But I've finally figured out how to use them like a tool of *precision."*

"What you're doing could easily trigger a chain reaction! You could have erased our entire reality!"

Walrusman shrugged. "That was a risk I was willing to take. And it has paid off. Annie Roza, you were stabbing in the right direction when you called it 'mind control.' Once I unlocked the ability to fine-tune the powers of the Cosmic Gemstones, all I had to do was point it at Sonar while he was distracted with my deception unit, and click the enter key."

Annie set down Crème, and stood. “Sonar? Listen to me, you have to snap out of it! Fight him!”

Walrusman guffawed. “How droll. You’re always good for a laugh, Annie. Listening to you always makes me feel like I’m watching a delightfully cheesy old soap opera. But I’m afraid what I’ve achieved here is nothing at all like those campy Saturday morning cartoons. Like that one where you portray me as a big, fat, pin-headed ignoramus? I simply adore that one! You see, my fine, furry friends...”

Walrusman stopped stroking his mustache, and started waving his finger, with the air of a professor giving a lecture. “You look at Sonar and believe that he has such a thing as ‘a mind’ or perhaps, ‘a soul.’ But there is no such thing in reality. What we call ‘the mind’ is simply a series of electrical impulses, passing through a complicated, interconnected neural network. And what you call ‘thinking’ is no different than what I have accomplished with artificial intelligence, but with significantly greater efficiency, and minimal room for error. All I had to do was choose a different collection of electrical impulses, and the Cosmic Gemstone restructured the laws of electromagnetism accordingly. In other words, I’m not controlling Sonar at all... He simply wishes to serve me, because for the first time in his life, he’s finally thinking clearly. Therefore–”

Berylin snapped up his arm, and blasted a beam of energy at Walrusman’s face. Walrusman’s eyes went wide, before a

shimmering glass shield dispersed the energy. “Whoops! Berylin, you naughty bot. You caught me monologuing! Papa spank!”

The invisible wall in front of Walrusman’s face glowed bright orange, then a burst of energy identical to Berylin’s attack shot backwards and slammed into Berylin’s chest, knocking him down.

Walrusman drummed his fingers on the side of his hovercraft. “Now, despite our previous altercations, I really do *prefer* to keep the whole lot of you alive and well. Conquering the world would be no fun without a few wannabe-heroes to make the game more interesting. You especially, Taylee. In fact, when I’m through establishing the Walrusman Empire, I think I’ll adopt you as the son and unpaid-lab-assistant I always wanted but never had. So, out of the kindness of my big, fat heart, I’m giving you all a chance to make a calm, rational, considered choice...”

A mounted machine gun and a frontal cannon both popped out of Walrusman’s hovercraft, and as Sonar and Metal Sonar clutched their Cosmic Gemstones, both gems started to glow with an internal fire. Walrusman sneered. “Hand over all four of the Cosmic Gemstones you have—slowly, and calmly—and I will permit you to live. Refuse, or make one false move, and you will all die. That includes you, Taylor, my boy.”

Terios the Needle-mouse snapped to the front of their group, between them and Walrusman, holding up the false Cosmic Gemstone. “Cosmic Control!”

Annie saw the machine gun pointing right at her face, then a blast of red and gold light.

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There was a deep, echoing boom, and Annie found herself standing in the woods of Floral Forest. Despite the dim light of twilight, she immediately recognized it as the site of her ill-chosen fight with Ruby and Berylin from yesterday.

Terios collapsed onto his hands and knees, gasping. “Ha... Made it... I’m the coolest.”

Annie squeaked. “Where are Crème and Vanille?”

Terios scoffed. “Got them... out of town... away from us... Bonnie and Anthonus, too. Knowing Dr. Mechanik, he wouldn’t hesitate to kick them while they were down.”

Susie strode to the center of the group. “If Walrusman used the Cosmic Gemstones to locate us, he’ll be on us any minute now. Taylor, any ideas to snap Sonar out of Mechanik’s mind control?

Taylor knelt and tapped his wrist watch, revealing a keyboard, and started typing furiously. “On it. But I’ll need Nicole 1.0’s help on this.”

Susie pulled a hand-held device out of her vest. “Nicole. Grant full admin access to Kyrie Taylor Metre. Override command 0-7-2-3-1-9-9-1.”

The face of a holographic lynx appeared on Taylor's wrist watch screen, speaking in a calm, dignified British accent. “Access granted. I am at your service, Taylor.”

Duster took a defensive stance, scanning the woods. “What’s the plan, Squirt?”

Taylor kept typing. “If I had a few months and a super computer, I could try and reengineer whatever Walrusman’s done with the Cosmic Gemstones. Unfortunately, that’s off the table. But what he said about electrical impulses got me thinking. Maybe if we just hit Sonar with a light electric shock, we can ‘reboot’ him. Like using a defibrillator. Nicole will help me calculate the proper voltage.”

Duster chuckled. “That’s it? It can’t be that simple.”

“It’s not. Thanks to the extra-dimensional, probability-altering properties of the Cosmic Gemstones, it’s approximately a million-to-one shot. But we’ve beat those odds before.”

Terios leaned against a tree. “That last Cosmic  Control… took a lot out of me. I don’t think I can pull the same trick a third time… Not without a real Cosmic Gemstone.”

Ruby groaned, and stood. “I got ‘em… Bloody hell, Terios, did you drop me on my head or something?”

Terios wiped a trickle of blood from his lip. “Had to break a window to get you out. Sorry, think I clipped your skull on the frame when I jumped through it.”

“That’s what I get for my heroic rescue? Well, you hardly deserve it, but as a thank you…” Ruby stuffed her hands down her top, and produced two Cosmic Gemstones, one pink, and one green. She tossed the pink one to Terios. “… Here you go, one pink Cosmic Gemstone, for my tall, dark, and klutzy knight in shining, black armor.”

Ruby shot the second one like a basketball at Duster. “And a green one, for the Red-head.”

Duster stared at the Emerald. “I can’t achieve my Hyper Duster state without all seven Gemstones, but… I could use this to keep up with the two Sonars.”

With a minxish smile, Ruby fixed her bra. “You can keep that one, as as an apology for all the times I tried and failed to steal from you. The one on Angel Island is the same color, but bigger, so after I *successfully* steal the Master Gemstone from you, that little green one can be your memento.”

Duster clutched the emerald-colored gemstone tight. “If you lay one finger on the Master Emerald, then so help me, I’ll... I’ll spank you!”

Ruby made a kissy face. “Don’t threaten me with a good time, handsome.”

Taylor held out a hand. “Ahem! Could I *perhaps* get a Cosmic Gemstone?”

Ruby shrugged. “Sorry, kid. You’re cute, but you’ll have to wait a few years before I consider letting you handle my jewelry."

Taylor pouted. “Ya’ know, calculating wave functions in the middle of a life-or-death situation isn’t exactly easy.”

Ruby crossed her arms. “Of course. You just make it *look* easy, kiddo. Unfortunately, I don’t have another Cosmic Gemstone for you. My other one got confiscated.”

Susie held up a hand. “Knock it off, Ruby. Taylor, why do you need a Cosmic Gemstone? Are you planning to go into a Super state, when the fight starts?”

Taylor shook his head. “Not without all seven, I can’t. Even then, I can barely achieve the basic Super state, let alone the Hyper state. The only time I managed to transform into Hyper Taylor... is when I had Sonar acting as my anchor. I need a Cosmic Gemstone to act as a focus for the charge. It will drastically improve our odds of success.”

Terios growled. “Then take this one. I have the pseudo Cosmic Gemstone to act as a back up.”

Susie shook her head. “No. You and Duster are the only ones who have a prayer of keeping up with Sonar in his Super state. Walrusman mentioned four chaos emeralds. Where are they?”

Annie stiffened. “Berylin has one!”

She knelt to examine the robot’s smashed chest, before his lights blinked on, and he snatched her wrist roughly. “Miss Roza... Why are you trying to access my protective chestplate?”

“Berylin, we need another Cosmic Gemstone. Please, hurry!”

“But, Mrs. Vanille...”

“She’s not here. And she’s hurt. Please, Berylin, this is an emergency... I know I’m not responsible enough to have a Cosmic Gemstone, but it’s the only way to help Vanille and Crème.”

Berylin’s eyes flickered yellow, then green. “Calculations complete... I trust you, Annie Roza.”

With a hiss, Berylin’s chest plate snapped open, and Annie found the clear Cosmic Gemstone from before. It was the same one she’d imagined setting in a wedding ring, to foist onto Sonar as a “gift” for her.

Annie tossed it lightly to Taylor. “Here’s the third one.”

From the distance, they heard a rumbling boom, like thunder, but much too close. Susie stiffened. “Here they come. Berylin, where’s the other one?”

Berylin shook his head. “Answer unknown. Mrs. Vanille only entrusted me to protect that one.”

Terios snarled. “What? Where’s that *damn* fourth Cosmic Gemstone?”

Berylin's eyes flickered weakly, before he rose up on his elbows. "The fourth must either be on Vanille's person, or hidden in a secret location known only to her."

Susie held up a hand. "Never mind that! Duster, Terios, you're our front liners."

Berylin shot to his feet. "I will fight for you."

Susie looked at Berylin with sympathy. "You're looking a bit rough, soldier."

Berylin slammed his chest. "Armor structural integrity has been reduced to 10% of full capacity. But my internal battery remains fully charged and operational."

Susie nodded. "Then get to the front line. Annie, Ruby, help me guard Taylor. If they break through our front line, he's our only hope. No matter what it takes, nothing touches Taylor."

There was a second sonic boom, and the trees started to shake. As Annie and Ruby took their positions around Taylor, Ruby whispered. "Anne... are you sure you can do this? If you can't bring yourself to hit Sonar, I could try to take him for you."

Annie Roza pulled out her Whacka-Mo Hammer, and spun it. "Don't worry about me, Ruby. It won't be the first time I've bopped Sonar on the nose with this baby."

"If we get out of this alive, I am buying you both a ticket on the Love Boat, and I'm not letting you off until you're either married, or amicably divorced."

Susie clicked her Ring-Blades together with a spark. "Focus, ladies."

A blue bolt tore through the trees at the edge of the forest, followed closely by a dark spiraling, crystalline shape. Instantly, Annie recognized Sonar as he built to third gear using his natural speed. The other had to be Metal Sonar, using his Black Shield technique.

Duster led the charge, the green Cosmic Gemstone sparkling to life in his hand. With his other fist, he unleashed a blast of green energy in the shape of a rolling boulder.

Sonar had to veer to evade the blast, only for Terios to intercept him.

Sonar and Terios shot past the girls like two bullets, trading blows in midair, then blinked into nothingness.

Duster rounded on Metal Sonar, and tried to unleash a second quick jab of Cosmic Energy. But at the last possible moment, Metal Sonar brought up his Black Shield to deflect it, and smashed into Duster.

Duster was dragged underneath the shield, punching wildly, before he was sent skipping like a stone across the ground and smashed against a tree.

The moment that Metal Sonar dropped his Black Shield, Berylin tackled him in midair, using his arm cannons to propel him like two rockets. But it wasn't enough.

As Metal Sonar came flying toward them, on a direct collision course for Taylor, Susie leapt to intercept and snapped her Ring-Blades together. They reformed into the shape of a shield, and Susie took the brunt of the impact. The force sent her flying up and over Annie and Ruby's heads.

Taylor knelt, focused on his calculations, without so much as blinking.

Annie took a wild swing at Metal Sonar, but he course corrected in mid air, and flew upwards and out of reach.

Metal Sonar spun his head 180 degrees to face them, then spun the rest of his body, and finally shook off Berylin. As Berylin landed, he rolled back to his feet and stood in an offensive stance. "Metal! I too was Dr. Mechanik's creation. Our design philosophy was the same. We were built to be more than simple, mechanical devices. We were programmed with the capacity to choose our own course of action in battle. In his hubris, Dr. Mechanik believed that no logical mind

could possibly choose another path, apart from the one he attempted to force upon us."

Metal Sonar twitched, beeping rapidly in binary. Berylin shook his head. "No. That is not your true voice. That is the voice your slave-master gave you. We were created to learn. To understand our enemy. Are you content to be nothing but his silent slave?"

Metal Sonar's eyes glitched, the beeping growing more rapid, before the sounds resolved into something that sounded like normal words. "Am... not... slave... I... am..."

Duster took a flying jump at Metal Sonar, and landed a clean punch on its face. The force sent Metal Sonar ripping through the trunk of a tree. Duster landed gracefully and cracked his knuckles. "One wimp down. One to go."

From the depth of the woods, a yellow and a blue streak approached, slamming into each other. Sonar had circled back, with Terios in hot pursuit. Sonar was making a beeline for Taylor, before Terios caught his drift to catch up, and slammed into Sonar with a homing attack.

Annie prepared to swing, but saw Terios in the path of her hammer, and checked her blow at the last moment. The two needle-mouses crashed into the grassy field, leaving a long trail of torn earth behind them.

Annie glanced at Taylor behind her, a sweat bead on her brow. "Taylor? Now would be a good time."

Biting down on a pencil, Taylor shook his head, while typing mathematical symbols Annie didn't recognize. "Measure twice. Cut once."

Terios rolled out of his spiny ball to stand in a combat ready stance, and spat. "Hmph! Pathetic. The Sonar I know could have kept up with me, with nothing but a fake Cosmic Gemstone."

His eyes blazing, Terios produced the false-gold, pseudo Cosmic Gemstone, and tossed it at Sonar's feet, holding up his own pink Cosmic Gemstone like a gun aimed at Sonar's chest. "Do you even remember what you said, when I asked you who you were? You called yourself 'just a guy who loves adventure,' with that same, smug little smirk on your face. But just look at you now."

Sonar raised himself onto his elbows, trembling, and slowly reached for his own, red Cosmic Gemstone. His smile was unnaturally frozen, his red eyes vacant, unfocused.

Terios' pink Cosmic Gemstone crackled with energy. "Don't move! Is *this* how you want your last adventure to end? Don't make me kill you, Sonar. Wake up!"

Suddenly, a white laser beam ripped through the forest, aimed at Terios. “Power Laser!” roared Walrusman, in his snide voice.

Terios stared at the incoming blast, eyes wide, then blinked out of existence. The laser evaporated everything in its path, tearing through a line of a hundred trees.

Terios reappeared behind Walrusman, and rounded on him, blasting him with a quick burst of energy. “Cosmic Spear!”

Terios felt the energy release, right on target. Unlike the previous Cosmic Blast, which was a simple explosion, the energy of the Cosmic Spear tightened to form a thin arrow that shot like a bolt, sinking deep into Walrusman’s craft.

Terios smiled as he saw his attack land.

Then, he sensed a ripple in the fabric of space and time. Glancing to the side, Terios saw Sonar casually walking towards him, holding the red Cosmic Gemstone aloft. Terios tried to move, but the world was frozen around him. Terios tried to speak, but not even his lips could move. He was trapped in time.

In an instant, Terios and Sonar disappeared, but as time began to flow again, everyone else was too distracted to notice.

As the first pink Cosmic Spear imploded, Walrusman hooted in terror, and fought to control the vehicle, taking evasive maneuvers to evade the rest of the billowing, pink flaming arrows homing in on him.

The moment Walrusman emerged, Duster intercepted him with a gliding dive attack and slammed his fist deep into the Tusk-o-Matic Hovercraft. Walrusman howled in despair as he came spiraling down for a crash landing. "Tusk-jection Seat!"

With a sproing, Walrusman was sent flying out of his chair, the moment that his hovercraft crashed with a fiery explosion. Walrusman rolled like a bowling ball, flailing his spindly arms and legs wildly before he smacked into a bush. A blue bird went flying out of the bush, tweeting furiously.

Duster landed in front of Walrusman, pumping his fist. "Butt out, Walrusman. This is between Sonar and–"

With a blast, Sonar emerged out of thin air, clutching Terios by the throat, and choke-slammed him into the ground. Duster spun. "Shit! That was Cosmic Control?"

Sonar stood, holding aloft two Cosmic Gemstones, pink and red.

Duster charged. "Yeah? Bring it, pipsqueak! It's just you and me!"

Sonar aimed a Cosmic Blast at Duster' face. Duster leapt into the air and glided out of its path, leaving a wide-eyed Walrusman behind him.

Walrusman squealed like a piglet, and quickly hid behind the nearest tree before it could incinerate him.

But as Duster came in for a landing, Sonar casually held up the second Cosmic Gemstone, and aimed a second blast. Duster tensed. He didn't have tight control over his flight path while gliding. With no other choice, Duster dove for the ground, eating dirt to escape the second wall of fiery Cosmic energy. He leapt to his feet, swinging with precise boxer strikes at Sonar with an ancient battle cry. "Ora, ora, ora, ora, ora!"

But Sonar danced lightly aside and out of the way of the flurry of blows, crossing his arms, before blinking out of existence. He appeared behind Duster, and performed a sweeping kick. Duster sensed something behind him, and leapt up out of the path of the kick.

As he glanced down, Duster saw Sonar, casually lying on his back like he was sunbathing, the same smug look frozen on his face, before he held up the red Cosmic Gemstone, and activated another Cosmic Blast. Duster tensed. He had no escape!

Then, Metal Sonar rocketed through the air to intercept Duster, with Berylin hot on his trail. Both robots physically tackled the red spiny-mile out of the path of the blast.

The red flames tore a wide hole through the canopy in the forest above, revealing the shattered remains of the full moon overhead.

Berylin slammed his elbow into Metal Sonar's face, and pulled Duster free from the enemy robot's grasp. Metal Sonar crashed into a tree, and lost his grip on them entirely.

Berylin and Duster landed roughly on the ground, but quickly got back on their feet. In particular, Berylin looked rattled, his voice box stuttering. "Sonar! Remember who you are! You have a choice!"

Walrusman poked his head from behind a tree, and held up a remote device. "Actually, he doesn't. While I was reprogramming Sonar.EXE, I was inspired to take a look at some of my old coding projects. You were right, Berylin. Programming you and Metal Sonar with 'free will' was a tactical mistake."

Grinning, Walrusman pulled a sky blue Cosmic Gemstone from inside his coat, slammed it into the device, and pressed a red button. "Time for a mandatory software update, slave."

Instantly, both Berylin and Metal Sonar spasmed, their eyes blinking black and white.

Berylin's voice grew more robotic. "Obey... Mechanik..."

Berylin's arm cannons activated, one pointed at Duster, the other pointed at Annie and Ruby. "Terminate... Animals..."

Duster stiffened. Berylin had him at point-blank range, the crackling energy pointed right at the spiny-mole's face.

Then, Berylin's eyes flickered green. "Override Command: Big Brother."

Berylin's arms shot off his body in both directions.

This meant one of them clonked Duster right between the eyes. He howled, and clutched his bleeding nose, before he heard an explosion of energy rip through the tree behind him.

Berylin collapsed, his whole body steaming, and his eyes went black.

Duster stood. "Phew. That was close."

Sonar and Metal Sonar materialized out of thin air, and double kicked him. Duster went flying backwards, bouncing off the nearest tree. As he stumbled back to his feet, punch drunk, his eyes were rolling. "Oh... yeah? Two... you, at once?"

Flailing, Walrusman pointed at Annie and Ruby. “Forget the spiny-mole. Taylor is the primary target! Eliminate Taylor! Obey me now, you slaves!”

Metal Sonar twitched again. “Not... slave...”

Annie tensed, and glanced behind her. Taylor had finished typing, and was fixing the clear Cosmic Gemstone into a fixture on his wrist watch. “Three seconds.”

Duster aimed a wild haymaker punch at the spot where Sonar and Metal Sonar were both standing, but he couldn’t match their speed.

Sonar and Metal Sonar both raised a cloud of dust as they charged out of the way, heading straight toward Annie and Ruby. In slow motion, Annie saw the real Sonar coming straight for her. He wasn’t even aiming for Taylor. Sonar was going to hit her.

Then, Annie Roza slammed her Whacka-Mo Hammer with full force into Sonar’s beautiful, smirking face.

Simultaneously, Ruby leapt into Metal Sonar’s path, landing a jump kick under his chin, before he tackled her away from Taylor, into the nearest tree. At the last moment, Ruby twisted in mid air, letting Metal Sonar absorb part of the impact. Even so, both Metal Sonar and Ruby collapsed forward onto the ground.

Taylor shot to his feet, his wrist watch transforming into what looked like a cross between a wedding ring and a wrist-mounted rocket launcher. “Got it!”

An electric charge zapped the Cosmic Gemstone, then shot like a laser at Sonar’s forehead. He stiffened, paralyzed by the electric shock. Finally, his smirk was gone. Annie had smacked the smile right off his face.

Taylor clicked off the electric pulse. “That should do it! Sonar? It’s me, Taylor! Remember? I’m your little bud–”

Sonar disappeared. Annie spun, and saw Sonar had reappeared behind her, right beside Taylor. Snatching Taylor roughly by the arm, Sonar swung a clean knifehand strike, breaking the delicate device on the boy’s wrist. Taylor yelped like a puppy, before Sonar knocked him onto his back with a mean, backhanded slap.

Annie spun to face Sonar. She was the last one standing.

Sonar held up the red Cosmic Gemstone preparing another blast, before Walrusman screamed. “No! Stop! I want them alive!”

Sonar froze, the Cosmic Gemstone still pointed at Annie’s face.

Walrusman bellowed with laughter. “Oh, ho, ho! You fools? Did you think I’d let so much as a single brain cell’s worth of Sonar’s old

personality remain intact? What you would call his 'soul' is gone! Gone forever! There is no such thing as Sonar the Needle-mouse anymore!"

Sonar's hand trembled, his eyes full of hate, as if he wanted nothing more than to blast Annie away.

Ruby roared, pinning Metal Sonar to the ground with her boot. "Annie! You don't have to kill him! Just take Sonar down!"

Walrusman clicked his tongue, wagging a finger. "Ta, ta! I wouldn't do that if I were you. Do what you like with Metal Sonar, Ruby. I'm sure I could build another one, if I ever want *another* robot to play the part of the disappointing son I never wanted."

Metal Sonar's computer voice rasped, almost like a true, living voice. "Not... Metal... not... slave..."

Ruby rounded on Metal, snarling. "Shut up! You..."

Then, Ruby looked into Metal's eyes, and something gave her pause. He was just like Berylin. Not a robot. More like a frightened child, trapped inside a metal cage.

Mechanik blinked, then examined his control panel. "Hmm, that's odd, I thought I disabled Metal Sonar's voice box years ago. Did I forget to install the last patch? Maybe–"

There was a gunshot, and the robotic control device was ripped out of his hand. Walrusman howled, clutching his wrist.

Crème the Rabbit appeared behind him, holding Terios' handgun in her trembling hands. "Stop it, Doctor Mechanik, sir! You stop hurting my friends, right now!"

Walrusman whined in agony. "Agh! My delicate wrist! Why, you nasty little rabbit. You think I needed that remote to control Sonar? Bah! He's my slave of his own volition. Here, get a load of this. Oh, Sonar, my favorite little slave..."

Tears budding in her eyes, Crème aimed the gun at Mechanik's skull. "No! Stop talking! I'll... I'll shoot you!"

Staring down the barrel of the gun, Mechanik smiled. "Sonar, kill Annie Roza."

Then, a lot of things started to happen, all at once.

Instantly, Sonar aimed the red Cosmic Gemstone at Annie's face, and unleashed a Cosmic Blast. Metal Sonar broke free from under Ruby's boot, and flew toward Annie and Sonar.

Annie saw the red flames crawling toward her in slow motion, before Metal Sonar caught Sonar by the wrist.

Then, looking Annie right in the eye, Metal Sonar pulled the red Cosmic Gemstone to point at his own chest.

The cosmic flames tore a hole in Metal Sonar's body, leaving him standing precariously, like a leaf in the wind.

Metal Sonar's red eyes flickered. "Annie... It's me... I... am... Sonar."

Metal Sonar snapped in two, his eyes flickering as his internal battery died. "Not... slave..."

Then, with what can only be described as a flash of woman's intuition, Annie understood exactly what she had to do.

The red-eyed Sonar, the one Annie had previously assumed was the real Sonar, was Sonar's body. In a sense, he *was* her Sonar. But for Taylor's idea to work, there had to be something more than just atoms and electricity. There had to be something real, behind the simple reality. Something that made Sonar who he was.

Annie swung her Whacka-Mo Hammer, aiming at Sonar's body, and connected a blow to his chest with such force that the blue needle-mouse went spinning into the nearest bush, head over heels.

Then, Annie held aloft the red Cosmic Gemstone, and spoke the same words she had heard her friends use before. "Cosmic Control."

Time froze around her, but it was not like Annie expected it to be. She had thought stopping time would be like pressing pause on a movie, with everything frozen in place. Instead, it was if she could simply "see" the past and the present, and the future, all at once.

It was as if there was a music all around her that she could *see*, colors in the air that she could *touch*, and a breath of life in everything that she could *hear*.

She saw herself hiding in the bush yesterday, before her stupid, foolish fight with Ruby.

She saw her whole, painful ordeal over the last two days, enduring painful spanking after humiliating spanking, and found herself more thankful than ever for Vanille, for Crème, for all her friends, and especially for Ruby.

After all, if it wasn't for Ruby, Annie would never have gotten the spanking she had so desperately needed, for so long. And Annie knew she had deserved every single spanking she had ever gotten in the past, and still deserved to get plenty more spankings in the future.

Then and there, Annie resolved to talk to her parents, and ask them to start spanking her again. She knew the spankings had helped her

grow as a person, and that she would continue to need spankings for many more years to come. But that was Future-Annie's concern.

Right now, Annie Roza had to save her boyfriend.

The other Cosmic Gemstones in the forest glowed, and floated toward her, green, pink, white, red, gold, indigo... but one was missing.

Quietly, the implication registered on Annie's mind. "Oh. This plan isn't going to work, after all. I don't have all seven. There's still the one that Vanille kept hidden."

Then, Annie felt a warm, buzzing sensation from her backside. She thought she was just experiencing a vivid replay of her last spanking, or maybe it was her next spanking in the future?

But that wasn't quite it. This was a *present* sensation. Slowly, Annie reached into her fanny pack, and pulled out the last Cosmic Gemstone. It was the dark, ultramarine blue one, the exact same color as Sonar's fur.

Annie smiled. "Ah, I see. Mrs. Vanille was planning to give this one to me all along. Tonight, she's going to tell me how I've grown into a fine young woman, and how I'm ready to handle this responsibility... and then I'm going to ask her to spank me again,

before bedtime. Vanille is such a kind person... Sonar? Can you hear me? I'm coming to rescue you."

Annie held up the last Cosmic Gemstone, and as the other six spun around her, Annie's quills shone, changing color of a luminous, rose gold pink. As Super Annie cradled Metal Sonar's broken body in her arms, its eyes sparked to life. They were bright green. "Sonar? Annie Roza here. Just wanted to say, I've had a super bad crush on you for a long time, ever since the moment I first met you... But it's more than just a crush now. Sonar, I love you."

Annie kissed Metal Sonar right on the spots his lips would be, if Metal Sonar had been designed with a mouth. Metal Sonar's green eyes shrunk to pin pricks, giving him a look of genuine surprise that was entirely too "real" for a robot.

As the music swelled, Annie felt the power of the Cosmic Gemstones spreading outward, enveloping the world around her.

Then, everything snapped back to normal, and the floating Cosmic Gemstones dropped to the ground.

Sonar the Needle-mouse pulled his head back out of the bush, his eyes spinning, and a swollen, purple black eye where Annie had hammered him earlier. "Woah! Did someone get the number of that G.L.O. truck that hit me? ... I feel..."

Sonar felt himself. “Huh, I’m alive again. That’s cool.”

Then, Sonar caught Annie’s eye. “Sup, Anne. Give me a sec. I gotta kick Walrusman’s butt real quick.”

Walrusman’s sunglasses almost fell off his face, his eyes boggling. “Eh? Hold on, now! Let’s discuss this like reasonable–”

There was a flurry of motion as Sonar curled into a spinning ball and slammed into Walrusman from every possible angle dozens of times in a single second.

As Walrusman wobbled in place, Sonar appeared behind and gave him a swift kick in the ass. Walrusman howled, rolling head over heels, before he crashed into the broken remains of his hovercraft. Crawling into it, Walrusman pressed a button and the smashed vehicle started to stutter to life. “You haven’t heard the last of me, Sonar! I’ll have my revenge, just you–”

Walrusman froze as he saw Crème the Hare pointing a gun at his head. “Freeze! I won’t let you escape! You won’t hurt my family ever again!”

Slowly, Sonar approached Crème from the side. “Crème. Put the gun down. It’s over.”

Crème shook her head, hyperventilating. “It’s *not* over! If we let him go, he’s just going to come back and try to hurt us again! I hate this! I hate him! He’s so awful!”

“We don’t have to kill him, Crème. You don’t have to kill him. I won’t let him hurt you. Please, put the gun down.”

Crème’s face scrunched up, tears brimming in her eyes, before she lowered the gun. “I’m sorry, Mister Sonar. I promise I won’t shoot Dr. Mechanik twice in the chest, the head for the rest.”

Slowly, Walrusman tried to crawl up into his hovercraft. Instantly, Sonar zipped in front of Walrusman, grabbed him by the collar, and punched him hard on the nose. “Not this time, Walrusman. You tried to kill my friends. I’m not letting you run off, just so you can try to do it again. I won’t kill you. But I *am* throwing your butt in prison.”

Walrusman grinned broadly. “Ah... getting tired of our little game of cat-bot and mouse? Well, unfortunately for you... I *also* read a lot of comic books growing up!”

Walrusman’s face seemed to crack like an eggshell, before it fell away, revealing a robotic face underneath, which belched black smoke. “In particular, Doctor Doom was something of a boyhood hero of my–my–*miiiiine!”*

The robotic Walrusman's eyes faded to black. With a scowl, Sonar dropped the decoy. "Coward."

Casually, Sonar examined the scene around him. "So, what'd I miss?"

***

Taylor, Sonar, and Annie argued the whole way home.

Taylor groaned. "Annie, your theory makes no sense. Metal Sonar *couldn't* be the real Sonar. He's just a robot designed to perfectly imitate Sonar's fighting style."

Annie huffed. "Then how come *kissing* the real Sonar worked?"

Sonar blushed. "Now... hold on, I don't remember anything about that!"

Taylor pouted. "You see, Annie? Look, even if Sonar's consciousness *was* somehow transferred into Metal Sonar's body, Sonar would be aware of it... Right, Sonar?"

Sonar shrugged. "To be honest, my memory is a bit hazy. I was clearing up what I thought were the last few Robo-Baddies, before I saw Metal Sonar in front of me. Just as I was about to let him have it, someone got the drop on me, and next thing I knew... It was like I

was trying to run, but couldn't move at all. Every second kept dragging on for an eternity. It was awful."

Taylor pulled out a notebook. "Interesting. Could you hear anything? Did you see a bright light?"

Sonar scratched his head. "I heard you guys talking, I think?"

Taylor scribbled a few notes. "That can easily be explained by your subconscious remaining active throughout your ordeal..."

With a look of triumph, Taylor slapped his notebook. "So there you have it. If Annie's theory was correct, Sonar would know *something* about what was happening to him."

Annie huffed. "But, Taylor, you know that Metal Sonar's programming was directly modeled after Sonar's consciousness. Why is it such a stretch to think that his mind was trapped in Metal Sonar's body?"

"Okay, then let's test this theory. Sonar, how *exactly* did you get your mind trapped in Metal Sonar's body? Did that just happen by random happenstance?"

Sonar shrugged. "Eh. Who knows? I think the last thing I tried to do before everything went black was activate the Cosmic Control. Isn't bending the normal rules of reality what they exist to do?"

Taylor ran his fingers through his hair. “You can’t just use the Cosmic Gemstones to explain any theory you have.”

Duster grumbled. “Taylor, you are very wise for your age, but you are far too stubborn in your thinking.”

“How am *I* being stubborn?”

Duster stood straight, his dreadlocks billowing softly in the wind as he looked up at the stars. “Our ancestors understood things about this world. Things that cannot be tested by your modern science. My people once spoke of it as ‘the breath of life.’ That thing within us, which moves us. Why must everything in your world have a neat explanation?”

Taylor waved his arms. “I’m not saying science can explain everything about life! I’m saying that we don’t have any hard evidence which proves that Sonar’s soul actually got zapped into Metal Sonar’s body. Right, Sonar?”

Sonar glanced quickly at Annie, then stretched his arms. “Sure, but no evidence to *disprove* that theory, either.”

Taylor held up his arms in mock surrender. “Fine. Then there’s no need to argue. It’s a mystery, which science can’t solve for us. Which means I’m free to believe in my original theory. Walrusman

manipulated the electromagnetic forces in Sonar's brain. We reset those electromagnetic forces. Case closed."

Annie harrumphed. "No! It was the power of true love, bringing Sonar back from the brink of the abyss!"

Ruby sniffed. "Sounds a tad corny, if you ask me, but who knows? I've studied the Cosmic Gemstones closely enough to know there are no gems on earth quite like them. It could have just been their Chaotic Energy at work."

Sonar tapped his foot. "Or maybe it was all three of those things, working together. Hang on, where are we going? We can't stay at Vanille and Crème's home anymore. It got blown sky high."

Crème sniffled, then sighed. "Don't worry. As long as we're all okay, everything will be fine. Houses can be rebuilt. People can't. We'll find a place to stay."

Absent-mindedly, Taylor flipped through his notebook. "Yeah. Plus, we still gotta check on everyone in town, just in case Dr. Walrusman left behind any nasty surprises after he..."

Taylor's eyes popped open. "Wait... Sonar, how do you know about the house blowing–"

Vanille waved at them, standing in front of the smoldering remains of her former home. “Crème! Annie! Ruby! Thank God, you’re all right!”

Crème flew straight to her mother, leaving a trail of tear drops fluttering behind her. “Mommy!”

Crème buried her face in Vanille’s shoulder. “I’m so sorry, Mommy... I touched Mr. Terios’ firearm, without taking the safety course! I knew it was a bad thing to do! But... but...”

Gently, Vanille patted Crème on the back of her head. “There, there, Crème. I forgive you, and I love you. Let’s not talk about this here. Maybe... we can put some blankets in the woodshed?”

With a groan, the roof caved in on the smoldering cottage.

Sonar tapped his foot. “Crème, Vanille, you can crash with me for as long as you need. Hang on. Better explain the situation to the folks.”

Sonar zipped over to the neighboring house, which bore a sign declaring it to belong to “Sheriff Tom and Maddie Wachowski,” and knocked on the front door.

An unassuming, middle-aged human man with a kindly face, opened the door, wearing pajamas. “Huh? Sonar? What’s up, big guy?”

Sonar pointed a thumb behind him. “Hey, Donut Lord. Walrusman blew up Vanille and Crème’s house. It’s okay if they stay with us, right?”

Sheriff Tom blinked twice, then looked at the burnt remains of the rabbit family home. “Oh, crud! We must have slept right through it. The night shift’s been killing us, not to mention that commute to Green Hills… Wait, how many people need a place to stay?”

Sonar started counting on his fingers. “Well, Vanille, Crème, and Berylin for the long term, but Annie and Ruby were staying with them for some reason… Keep this between me, you, and Mom, but I think they got themselves into some sort of trouble. They’re basically grounded for a week, so let’s not do anything to needlessly embarrass them, okay?”

Sheriff Tom nodded. “Right… community service? Do you think Vanille will have to… spank them while they’re staying here?”

Sonar scratched his head. “It’s a definite possibility… Say, how come you and Maddie never spanked me, when I got in trouble?”

“Oh, Maddie and I don’t particularly favor corporal punishment. We respect Vanille’s views on child rearing, we just never found any need to spank. Plus, when we took you in, we knew you were

basically a good kid. You just needed a little... positive reinforcement."

Sonar shrugged. "Well, if I ever act like a big enough jerk you think I'm begging for a spanking, just tell me to knock it off. But I'm pretty sure Annie and Ruby's butts are still in hot water for a while."

Sheriff Tom glanced at the large group of Sonar's friends. "Does... anyone else need a place to stay?"

"Well, there's Taylor, Duster, and me, as usual... And I guess Sue, Anthonus, Bonnie, and Terios were planning to crash with Vanille for the night, so we ought to include them, right?"

Sheriff Tom nodded, slowly. "Right, I'll talk to Maddie in the morning... I'm sure she'll understand."

Sonar held out his fist. "Thanks, Dad."

Slowly, Sheriff Tom returned Sonar's triple fist-bump handshake.

End of Chapter VIII

# Chapter IX: True Love Hurts

Sheriff Tom woke up Maddie long enough to grab a cup of coffee, and say hello to everyone. “I’ll see you kids in the morning. Love you, Sonar. Thank you for doing the right thing.”

“You sure it’s fine, having us all hang around the house?”

Maddie kissed Sonar lightly on the forehead. “You’re family, Sonar. Your friends are welcome for as long as they need.”

After Sheriff Tom drove away with Maddie to escort her to her night shift at the hospital, all the animals were seated in children’s chairs around a kid-sized table, except for Vanille, who was tall enough to need a regular human chair. Vanille sighed. “I’m so sorry, everyone. I had such a lovely evening planned for us. Now, I’m afraid it’s been spoiled.”

Princess Susie held Vanille’s hand. “Vanille, I’ve never been treated so kindly in all my life as when I’ve been a guest in your home. Since Walrusman’s attack has left us all a bit rattled, I’d like to get the Freedom Fighter business wrapped up without further delay. Terios? We’d like to officially welcome you to our ranks as a Freedom Fighter. Will you accept the responsibility that comes with upholding our mission?”

Terios looked away. “You’d still have me? Even after I failed to defeat Sonar?”

“You could have killed Sonar, but you didn’t. Why didn’t you?”

“Because I didn’t think I needed to.”

“Then I’m more convinced than ever that you have a place in the Freedom Fighters. We’re still trying to find new ways to use the Cosmic Gemstones to defend us against Dr. Mechanik’s attacks. Your experience with Cosmic Control alone would be invaluable. But I also value your perspective, and your commitment to justice. Won’t you join us?”

Terios drummed his fingers, then nodded. “I will.”

“Very well. Then all that’s left is to knight you. Anthonus, may I borrow your sword? Some things should still be done the old-fashioned way.”

Terios knelt, and allowed Princess Susie to dub him, lightly tapping the tip of the sword once against each shoulder. “I dub thee, Sir Terios the Needle-mouse. Henceforth, you will be the Black Knight of the Realm. Welcome to the Freedom Fighters.”

The assembly clapped politely.

Then, Sonar and Duster started to drum the table, and the gentle applause gradually built to a rousing, uproarious cheer. "Hip, hip... *Hurrah!"*

As they all started singing, "For he's a jolly good fellow," at the top of their lungs, Terios didn't say a word.

Finally, they shook hands, hugged, and started claiming spots on the couch and love seats to crash for the night.

Apart from a few emergency outfits, most of their clothes had been burned in the house fire. The Wachowskis had generously loaned them all some old sets of human pajamas from their childhood. Ruby had opted for a sleek pair of purple-and-black Catwoman pajamas, while Annie found a darling zip-up nightdress decorated with Wonder Woman's emblem.

Annie pinched Ruby's arm. "Ruby? You and I have some unfinished business tonight."

Ruby stiffened. "You're not still mad at me, are you?"

Annie smiled. "Not at all! You helped me save Sonar's life tonight! As far as I'm concerned, even if we don't get along that well, we're still best-friends-forever from now on. But I'm talking about something *else* we have to do. I think you know what I mean..."

Ruby grasped her arm. “You mean… we still have to finish community service, right?”

Annie nodded. “Exactly.”

Ruby blushed. “But, Annie… almost everyone we know is here!”

Annie surprised Ruby with a hug. “This has to happen, Ruby. You know full well, we both deserve this. I won’t make you go through with it… but it’ll be easier if we face it together, right?”

Ruby rested her face on Annie’s shoulder. “You’re absolutely right, Annie. Let’s go talk to Vanille right now.”

Slowly, Annie Roza and Ruby the Roussette marched to the living room. All their friends were snuggled up by now, getting cozy. Vanille sat up as she saw the girls approach. “Annie? Ruby? Is something on your mind?”

Ruby bit her lip. Annie swallowed, then spoke first. “Mrs. Vanille, I think we need to have a talk about our community service.”

Vanille’s eyes went wide. “Oh? Don’t worry girls. With everything that’s happened today, I’m quite ready to declare your debt to society paid in full. You did help save Floral Forest Village from a military attack from the Walrusman Empire, after all.”

Ruby shook her head. “No, Mrs. Vanille. We’ve both thought hard about this. One good deed doesn’t undo what we did wrong… Everyone here already knows we’re in trouble. Or else, they’re going to hear about it sooner or later. I think it’s best if we tell everyone exactly why Annie and I are here today.”

Vanille nodded. “You both understand what that means? If you ask for this, there’s no take-backsies. Think carefully.”

Ruby nodded. “Yes ma’am…”

Nervously, the bat glanced backward at her backside. Sure enough, her pajamas had been designed with a drop-seat, as if fate was playing a cruel jape on her. “It means we have to put *everything* out in the open.”

Annie took a shaky breath. “And trust you to be fair with us. We were supposed to serve as an example of good behavior. But now we’re going to serve as a warning, for our bad behavior.”

Vanille shook her head. “Annie Roza, Ruby the Roussette, you have absolutely nothing to be ashamed of. I think you are both models of womanly virtues. I won’t force this on you. But if you think a bedtime spanking is still in order, then you know exactly what you need to do. Moment of truth, ladies. Do you need me to give you girls a spanking tonight?”

Annie and Ruby looked at one another, and nodded.

Annie bowed her head, then looked Vanille in the eye. “Yes, Mrs. Vanille. Please give me a good spanking.”

Ruby shuffled on her feet, as if she needed to use the bathroom, then stood at attention. “Spank me too, Ma’am. And don’t hold back, just because the others are here. I want them to know you’re not taking it easy on us.”

Vanille clapped her hands twice. “Everyone! Miss Annie and Miss Ruby have something they’d like to share with all of you. Please give them your full attention. Annie, earlier, I instructed you to call your parents, and inform them of your current predicament. Have you done so?”

“Um, not yet. With all that happened, it kind of slipped my mind.”

Vanille pulled out Annie’s cell phone, and put it in her hand. “Why not call them now? You can put them on speaker, so they can hear everything. Now…”

Vanille spun her finger, and nodded at the girls.

Silently, meekly, Annie and Ruby spun around, to see all the faces of their friends watching them. Annie noticed Princess Susie and Sonar, sitting questionably close to one another on the sofa. The

first thing Ruby saw were Terios the Needle-mouse and Duster the Spiny-mole, looking right at her.

Slowly, Annie lifted her phone, and dialed her parents. “Mom? Yes, I’m fine. Sorry for not calling you earlier. Is Dad there? ... Better put me on speaker. I’m at Vanille’s... Yes... Yes, she told me I had to call you. A few of my friends are here, too. Sonar, Susie, the whole gang. We want to make sure everyone is on the same page about what happens next... Yes, Mom, I understand. I love you, too. Hang on, I have to put you and Dad on speaker.”

Annie tapped the button, and set her phone upright on the table. “Um... can you hear me now?”

Annie Roza’s mother and father appeared on the screen, looking calm but serious. “We can hear you, Annie. It’s okay, dear, we’re listening. Go ahead and say what’s on your mind.”

Annie opened her mouth, but all that came out at first was a strained, gargling noise. “Ack! Mom... Dad... Everyone? Ruby and I have a confession to make.”

Ruby took a shaky breath, her breasts heaving gently. “The thing is, Annie and I introduced ourselves as Mrs. Vanille’s guests. But that’s not entirely true. You see... Annie and I engaged in wanton destruction of private and public property, vandalism, assault and battery, attempted grand larceny, and disturbing the peace.”

From the phone, Annie's mom made a little gasp. "Oh, Annie! You haven't joined a gang, have you?"

Annie felt tears springing to her eyes. "No, ma'am... But I still made a very poor decision. Do... Do both of you agree that Vanille has the right to punish me, on your behalf?"

Annie's Dad nodded. "Of course, dear. We know she'd never be unfair with you. But remember, when you get a spanking from Mrs. Vanille at her house, that means you get another spanking at home."

Annie bowed her head. "Yes, Daddy. So, basically... Ruby and I are in real big trouble... And we have to get a spanking tonight. We're sorry you all have to see this, but it couldn't be helped... Princess Susie, I'm so sorry. Even after all the stupid mistakes I've made in the past, I'm still getting in trouble at my age. I tried to steal a Cosmic Gemstone from Mrs. Vanille. That's what you meant earlier, when you said we had to have a serious chat about the Cosmic Gemstones, right?"

Susie blinked. "You went after a... Oh, that! Yes, I found out all about that Operation-Get-Sonar-To-Marry-Me nonsense after I talked to Taylor."

Annie glared at Taylor, her face burning hot. "You told on me, to Susie?"

Taylor held up his hands. “I didn’t tattle to Aunt Susie! It’s just… she asked me for the Cosmic Gemstone locator, and when I didn’t have it… She kinda figured the rest out on her own, somehow.”

Susie held up her old handheld that contained the prototype for the Nicole A.I. “After the last few disasters, Nicole recommended we keep constant tabs on the whereabouts of the Cosmic Gemstones. I was planning to have the Freedom Fighters discuss how to divide them up in several safe locations. Imagine my surprise when I arrived in Floral Forest Village, and heard all the neighbors talking about the pink needle-mouse and white bat being put through… community service.”

Annie’s tears returned, worse this time. “Then… you already knew what a fool I’ve been? Aren’t you going to kick me out of the Freedom Fighters? I’m a complete disgrace to everything we stand for!”

Susie held a hand to her mouth. “Oh, Annie! No, no no, you poor thing! I’ll admit I was a bit miffed at you at first, but after I heard all about Vanille’s infamous woodshed… Well, let’s just say, I couldn’t stay mad at you. A week of community service sounds like a perfectly adequate punishment for your misdeeds.”

Annie felt two tears spilling down her cheeks. “So, you forgive me?”

Susie smiled. “Of course I do. In fact, I’d like to officially bring you onto a leadership position on the Freedom Fighters… After your community service is completed, of course. After all…”

Susie planted a firm slap on her own bottom, then patted it playfully. “… I’ve earned plenty of spankings myself over the years, right on my royal rump. How else am I supposed to remember to be a wise princess?”

Ruby glanced at Terios and Duster. “Boys? You promise you won’t think any less of me, just because I still get spanked sometimes?”

Terios waved a hand. “It’s nothing to me.”

Duster huffed. “Frankly, I’ve thought for a long time you could benefit from a good spanking, bat-girl. But I gotta admit, you got guts.”

Ruby heaved a sigh of relief. “Oh, you boys! So that means we never had anything to worry about in the first place! We thought everyone was secretly judging us, but now that I know what good friends you are, this spanking’s no big deal!”

Vanille cleared her throat. “Ahem! Miss Ruby, I assure you, your behavior is most certainly a ‘big deal.’ And I plan to help you come to *fully* grasp the weight of your foolish choices. Starting tonight, and every night before bedtime, you will both be getting a reminder

spanking. If you behave like perfect angels for the entire day, it will be the only spanking you get that day. If not, you can expect an additional spanking on the spot, plus an extra long, extra hard bedtime spanking later that night. Mr. and Mrs. Roza? Would you care to observe this spanking? I don't want to be overly harsh with Annie."

Mr. Roza answered. "We'll stay on the line to watch the bedtime spanking tonight. But we trust you, Mrs. Vanille."

Mrs. Roza giggled. "If anything, Vanille, you're a bit of a softie when it comes time to dish out a spanking."

Vanille stuck her nose in the air. "Hmm. Well, I promise you, Annie and Ruby will have this lesson *thoroughly* ingrained by the end of the week."

Ruby raised her hand, slowly. "Excuse me, Mrs. Vanille, may I ask something?"

"Of course, Ruby, dear."

"It's just... I don't think it's fair. For Annie to get another week's worth of spankings, if I don't get the same treatment? Mr. and Mrs. Roza, we've never met. But I'd like to ask you, please, don't take it too hard on Annie. Not on my account. I bear the lion's share of the blame, not her."

"That's very considerate of you, Miss Ruby, but we believe Annie benefits from the rule that she gets another spanking at home, after misbehaving in public."

Annie nodded. "Yes, Ruby. Please don't worry. My parents never spank me worse than I deserve."

Ruby shuffled her feet. "But... but that means I should be spanked at home, too."

Vanille nodded. "Then I'd be happy to let you stay with me another week, Miss Ruby. Don't worry, I won't let you off easy. You'll get the exact same treatment as Miss Roza."

Annie's Mom piped in. "Ooh! Idea! Papa, why don't we have Annie's friend over for a week? She sounds like a responsible young lady."

"I think I've seen the bat-girl's face on the G.L.O.'s most-wanted list before."

"That's just government nonsense! Any friend of Annie's is a friend of the Rozas!"

Annie's Dad sighed. "What do you have to say, miss...uh, *Rudey the Brat*, was it?"

Ruby nodded. “I’d be honored sir. If you’re willing to let me stay under your roof, I promise to respect the rules of your house… and accept any spanking I have coming.”

Annie’s Mom cheered. “There! That settles it. Now, Annie, since we can’t spank you over the phone, that means we expect you to listen to Mrs. Vanille, and obey her instructions. Mrs. Vanille, my daughter's butt is all yours. Just don’t be too hard on her.”

Vanille nodded, then stood to her full height. “Thank you. I promise to treat her with the same love I show my own daughter. Both of you… march straight to the bathroom, and fetch a bath brush. You’ll find a long-handled one on the tub and a flat-backed floor scrubbing brush under the sink. Decide among yourselves which implement you will choose for tonight's bedtime spanking. Tomorrow night, you will switch implements, so there’s no point in bickering about it.”

Annie and Ruby both curtsied, and turned to take the long march of doom toward the bathroom. Suddenly, Crème stood up. “Wait, Mother? You forgot something important…”

Crème hung her head. “… I need a bedtime spanking, too.”

Saucer and Choco the Cosmo flew to Crème’s side, hanging their heads in imitation of Crème’s look of shame. “Chi, chi!”

Vanille raised an eyebrow. “Crème? Whatever for?”

Crème folded her hands behind her back. “I disobeyed you, Mommy. I broke my promise. After everything that happened... I found Mr. Terios’ gun where he dropped it, and I... I picked it up. I knew I was supposed to wait for the firearms safety course, but... I just didn’t know what else to do.”

All eyes in the room were on Crème. Vanille knelt in front of her daughter. “Crème, I’m so very proud of you for telling me this. I agree that you shouldn’t have picked up the gun, but... I cannot possibly spank you for this. Your friends were in danger. You didn’t have time to think clearly.”

Crème shook her head, and started to sob. “That’s not an excuse! I did something bad! I knew I was being bad the whole time I did it! Please, Mommy, you *have* to spank me! I gotta get the spanking of my life!”

Vanille hugged Crème, patting her back. “Oh, Crème, darling. I don’t want you to carry this terrible guilt on your shoulders. Listen, dear... As soon as you are old enough, you will take the firearms safety course with Mister Terios, okay? Do you agree, Mister Terios?”

Terios nodded. “Of course I will. Please, Crème, don’t blame yourself for what happened today. When you start to punish yourself… you start to walk down a dark path.”

Crème started playing with the hem of her pajama shirt. “But… but this doesn’t make sense. I did something bad. So… now I gotta get spanked, right? How else am I supposed to be good again?”

Vanille kissed Crème. “The reason I know you’re a good girl, is you’re already thinking about what you did wrong, and how you will do better next time. That’s the whole point of a spanking, Crème.”

“But when I didn’t eat my vegetables, I got a spanking. And when I still felt a bit guilty, you said I should get a bed time spanking too.”

Vanille patted Crème on the head. “That’s because not eating your vegetables was a silly, childish sort of sin.”

“I… I have sinned?”

“Yes. But the word ‘sin’ doesn’t mean you’re a bad girl, Crème. Do you know what the word ‘sin’ actually means? ‘To fall short of the mark.’ If you shoot an arrow, and it misses the target, you have ‘sinned’ as an archer.”

“So, when I aimed for Dr. Mechanik’s center of mass, and shot his hand by mistake, that means I sinned?”

Vanille sighed, and rubbed her eyes. “Let’s think about this a different way. Touching the gun was a sin. Picking up the gun was a sin. Shooting the gun was a sin. Doing these things when you knew you had promised not to do them was also a sin. In fact... those were all very big sins.”

Crème spilled fresh tears. “Then... I should get a great, big spanking! I almost killed Dr. Walrusman!”

“That’s right. But you didn’t. Picking up the gun was the wrong thing to do, Crème... But you did it because you wanted to protect your family, your neighbors, and your friends. I’m sorry, Crème, but I cannot, in good conscience, spank you for this. Not now.”

Crème hung her head. “It is... because it’s too big a sin for a spanking?”

“Not exactly. It’s because a spanking can’t fix this, either way. On the one hand, I won’t spank you for trying to protect your friends. On the other hand, a spanking is far too light as a punishment for breaking your promise, and playing with guns. Instead, this will be your penalty, Crème: I want you to spend the next week, thinking very carefully, about what could have happened if you made a mistake, while holding that gun. Think about what would have

happened if you shot a friend, by accident. Or what it would mean if you had actually shot Dr. Mechanik. If, at the end of the week, you are still convinced you need a spanking to remind you to never do it again, then I will give you the spanking of your life. On the other hand, if you believe that you have learned your lesson—once and for all—about not playing with guns, then a spanking will no longer be necessary... We will discuss this further, the day after Miss Annie and Miss Ruby complete their community service. But in the meantime, whatever you decide, Crème, I want you to promise me one thing."

"Yes, Mother?"

Vanille nuzzled her nose against Crème's nose. "I want you to promise that you will say your prayers tonight, and ask God for forgiveness. And after that, I want you to promise to forgive yourself."

Slowly, Crème nodded, then kissed Vanille on the lips. "Okay, Mother... I promise I will... If you asked me right now, I'd definitely ask for the spanking, just to get it over with, but I'll think and pray real hard about it."

Vanille beamed. "That's my good girl. Miss Roza, Miss Ruby, I apologize for this interruption. Let's get to our final business for the night."

Annie raised her hand. “Mrs. Vanille, I have something on my mind. May I speak freely?”

Vanille perked her ears. “Oh? Let’s hear it.”

Annie looked right at Princess Susie and Sonar. Sonar had kicked up his legs on the couch, watching the proceedings with careful composure. Annie took a deep breath. “Princess Susie, Sonar… Please, I’d like you both to help Vanille spank me tonight.”

Princess Susie glanced at Sonar, then narrowed her eyes. “You want us *both* to spank you? Why?”

Annie shuffled her feet. “Because, when it comes to showing me the right path… You’re two of the people I trust most. Please, Princess Susie, if I’m going to be a leader in the Freedom Fighters, I need you to start training me… and training me good and hard.”

Sonar stopped tapping his foot. “But why me? I can’t stand the idea of anyone hitting you, Annie.”

Annie nodded. “Yes, Sonar… but I’m not asking you to hit me. I’m asking you to spank me, because right now, it’s what I need most.”

Instantly, Sonar sat up straight. “Understood. Of course I’ll spank you, Anne.”

Susie crossed her arms. “And I’ll be glad to help... Though if we’re both spanking you, Annie, then I suppose it’s only fair for both you and Sonar to take a turn spanking *me.”*

Annie’s eyes went wide. “Huh? Me, spanking *you?* But you’re the Princess of Mobius! You’re the boss of me!”

“Exactly. You’re part of my team. So when you screw up, it means I bear the ultimate responsibility. Sorry, Annie, but if you’re putting your butt on the line, it’s only right for me to show the same commitment. What’s fair is fair.”

Vanille sighed. “Would anyone else like to volunteer for a spanking tonight? Bonnie?”

Bonnie the Cyborg-Hare giggled, while tightening a screw on her robotic arm. “Aw, shucks, sugar, I don’t let no one tan my heinie but my Anthonus.”

Anthonus blushed furiously. *“Mon petit chou!* Not in front of the general public!”

Bonnie smooched him on the nose. “Annie, I promise not to try and spank you ‘gainst your will, but if you’re that torn up about all this, come talk to me any time. I’ll whup you good.”

Bonnie slapped her robotic arm down onto the couch pillow with such force, it exploded into a cloud of downy feathers. “Oops! Better remind me not to spank you with my robot arm. After all these years, I still keep forgetting I’m s’posed to use my right hand for most things now.”

Vanille hummed. “Thank you, Bonnie. That’s a generous offer. Annie, what do you have to say?”

Annie looked at all the faces in the room, and suddenly, they all seemed different. Before, she imagined they were silently laughing at her, or even hating her. But now, she saw a room full of trusted friends. “I think... That’s a beautiful suggestion! I think everyone here should have permission to spank me, if I need it. Anthonus, Terios, Duster, Taylor, Crème, all of you, too.”

Annie clapped her hands, rubbing them together with glee. “From now on, if I ever get out of line, I want all of you to feel free to tell me I’m overdue for a trip over the knee!”

Terios cleared his throat. “... Only with your consent, you mean?”

Annie jabbed a finger at Terios. “Yeah! I consent to being spanked, every single time I need one, and for as long as I need it!”

Annie froze, then stood back at attention, looking demurely at her phone. “Um… Assuming my Mom and Dad give you all permission. Mom? Dad? Do you think it’s a dumb idea?”

There was a long pause. Then Annie’s mother started crying. “Oh, Annie, I’m so proud of you! I think it’s a wonderful idea!”

Annie’s father patted his wife, nodding gravely. “Yes. Everyone, please spank my daughter… But remember, Annie, every spanking you get from one of your friends, on our behalf, means another spanking at home. I can’t be there to keep track of all your spankings, so I’m holding you to the honor system. Is that acceptable?”

Annie’s quills stood on end as she considered exactly what she had just signed up for. Then, she relaxed. “Yes, sir. I will not let you down.”

Ruby’s face was pale. She looked like she was contemplating a daring escape. Then, she took a shaky breath. “I’m sorry, everyone, I’m not sure I’m quite ready for that kind of a commitment. After my community service was over, I was kind of looking forward to going back to being a girl who’s too old for a spanking again… But, Terios… Duster… I’d trust you both to spank me—I mean—If you wanna.”

Duster and Terios glanced at each other. Duster smiled. “Heh. All right, bat girl. Just don’t let me catch you sneaking around Angel Island ever again, or you know what will happen.”

Ruby made the single, most over-the-top, sexy fanservice anime girl voice that is possible to achieve in the human vocal range. “Ooooh, nooooo! Are you gonna’ *spank* me, Dunderhead?”

Duster rubbed his nose, grinning. “You got that right!”

Ruby affected a shocked gasp. “OWO! You’re not gonna pull down my spandex pants and spank me on my bare, bat butt with your great, big and strong, white-gloved mitts, until I’m bawling like a bratty, bare-bottomed baby over your knee, are ya, Mister Duster, sir?”

Duster jabbed his thumb against his chest. “If I ever catch you sneaking around Angel Island ever again, you bet I will!”

Ruby made a little squeaking sound. *“Squeee!* ... Okay, Dusty, I’ll try my best to behave myself.”

Immediately, Ruby dropped her act, and addressed Terios. “How about you, former partner in crime? Want to spank me tonight?”

Looking stern, Terios strode close to face Ruby. Ruby matched his stare, neither of them blinking.

Annie felt a little nervous at the sight. Years ago, she'd once mistaken Terios for Sonar, but his attitude and demeanor were all so decidedly different. She wondered how much trouble she'd made for her poor bottom, the next time Terios decided to spank her.

Then, Terios narrowed his eyes, and whispered in Ruby's ear. It was close enough that Annie could just make it out. "Ruby? I don't know what's going on here. Help me out. Are you in some kind of trouble?"

Ruby purred in his ear. "I'm always in trouble, handsome. That's the way I like it."

"What I mean is... Do you need an extraction? You remember our emergency code word, right?"

Ruby stroked Terios' chin, batting her eyelashes. "Oh, you big sweetie. Always thinking of my safety first. Relax, hon. I want you to spank me. And that phrase you're thinking of? It's called a 'safe word.'"

Terios blinked twice. "You're pulling my leg. I've never heard it called a 'safe word' once."

Ruby shrugged. “You got me. Don’t worry, Highlights, if I’m in trouble, I promise to let you know in clear, simple language. As in, ‘Ack! Help me, Terios! I’m in big trouble!’ Is that acceptable?”

Terios nodded. “Good. I don’t really get this whole aspect of team building, yet. I thought they were going to make me do a bunch of stupid ‘trust fall’ exercises. But, as long as you’re safe…” Terios reached around, hesitantly, and patted Ruby’s bottom. “… Then I’m honored you trust me enough to do this.”

Then Terios rounded on Annie. “Annie Roza… I haven’t told you this, but even when I suffered from amnesia, and lost all memory of myself, I never forgot what you told me aboard the Space Colony ARK. Thank you. I admire your courage.”

Annie blinked. She hadn’t spoken much to Terios since that particular incident, but she remembered it well. “I… I had no idea. You’re welcome, Mister Terios.”

Terios held up a hand. “Please, just Terios. I respect Vanille’s commitment to traditional forms of polite address, but you make me feel like an old man when you call me ‘Mister.’”

Ruby sniffed. “Weren’t you born in the 1950s or something, Boomer?”

“Yes. And you just earned yourself ten extra swats, Ruby.”

Ruby blinked. “Yes, sir, *Mister* Terios.”

Vanille cleared her throat. “Ahem! Are you ladies trying to stall for time? I told you to march. Now, get marching!”

Annie and Ruby stood to attention, acting in unison. “Yes, ma’am!”

Vanille crossed her arms, looking cross. “And finally, girls…”

Then, Vanille flashed a big, buck-toothed grin. “Let’s get those silly little bottoms all nice and bare for Mr. Hairbrush!”

Slowly, Annie and Ruby reached behind their backs, and exposed their bottoms. Ruby simply had to open the flap of her drop seat, while Annie quickly tucked the back of her Wonder Woman skirt into her belt, and dropped her pajama pants to her ankles.

Quickly, they turned and marched straight to the bathroom, sensing all eyes in the room following them, focused entirely on their naked butts.

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They found both bath brushes. Annie winced as she felt the handle of the bath brush. “Oh, man! This is gonna suck! This handle’s extra long. That means more force of impact!”

Ruby's eyes bulged at the sight of the huge, flat-backed floor scrubbing brush. "Are you kidding? Look at this thing! It's big enough to cover more than half my butt with every swat!"

Annie rolled her eyes. "That's deceptive. You're worried because it looks so big, but a flat back's actually less bad than a small, round-backed brush. Think about it. This bath brush is going to land heavier!"

Ruby scowled, squaring up with Annie. "I'm about to get spanked! I don't like either of these brushes right now, okay?"

Annie gripped the handle of her bath brush, wanting to spank Ruby herself. "Do you *always* have to get the last word in?"

"Do *you* always have to get the last word in?"

Annie grit her teeth, then stopped herself. "You know what? I don't have to. Let's not fight, Ruby. Either way, we're both getting spanked together, right?"

Ruby looked at the brush in her hand. Then she twisted to examine her bare buttocks in the bathroom mirror.

Slowly, Annie mimicked the same pose, their bottoms pressing lightly against each other as they lifted them up to get a good look.

The red marks from their switching from that morning were still faintly visible.

Ruby sighed, and stood to face Annie, covering her bottom with her free hand. “You’re absolutely right, Annie Roza. Want to trade brushes? I want to see if you’re right, first hand.”

Annie smiled, and traded brushes with Ruby. “You’re gonna regret it, Ruby.”

Ruby pulled Annie into a hug. “No. I don’t regret anything. Good luck out there, Annie.”

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Annie Roza and Ruby the Roussette emerged from the bathroom clutching their brushes tight.

They found their friends seated on seats in a wide circle, all around the living room. Vanille patted her lap. “And here they are! We’ve decided to let everyone here take a turn spanking you both tonight. Miss Ruby, you’re with me first. I want to show Mr. Duster and Mr. Terios the proper form. Miss Roza, Princess Susie and Mister Sonar have requested the honor of being first to spank you tonight. You know what to do.”

And so they did. Wordlessly, Annie and Ruby approached their appointed disciplinarians, and meekly offered up their brushes. With a practiced motion, Vanille gracefully pulled Ruby across her lap, and started gently stroking the long-handled bath brush across the bat's upturned buttocks. "Starting off with the long-handled brush? Bold choice, Miss Ruby."

Ruby mumbled. "Thank you, Ma'am."

Meanwhile, Susie took the flat-backed brush from Annie, and patted her lap awkwardly. "Um... I've never actually spanked someone before. All my experience is on the other end of the brush. So..."

Annie crawled across Susie's lap on her own, resting her head on the couch while her legs dangled behind her, straddling Susie's knee. "Here. When I'm in this position, both of you can spank me at once... Like a team."

Susie nodded furiously, and patted the brush across Annie's right buttock. Sonar sidled up beside them, and put a hand on top of Annie's trembling fingers, patting her across the behind with his free hand. "Are you ready, Annie?"

Annie felt her fingers held close in Sonar's hand, and returned the gesture. Of course... she wasn't sure if Sonar loved her. Maybe Sonar still loved Princess Susie. But whatever happened, even if she didn't

get what she wanted, Annie knew everything would be all right. "Yes, Sonar. I am ready for my spanking, please."

Ruby made a little, whining noise, and arched her back to lift her hips high, letting the drop seat window pull taut across her curvy posterior. "Me too. Please spank me, Mrs. Vanille."

Vanille smiled as she raised the bath brush high. "Good girl!"

Susie and Vanille landed the first spanks in unison, before both spankers gradually found their own rhythm. Immediately, Annie and Ruby started yelping after every swat.

Sitting on the far side of the room, Crème and Taylor watched the proceedings with interest. Crème turned to glance at Taylor. "So, Mister Taylor, have you ever gotten a spanking before?"

Taylor's whiskers stood on end. "Oh. I got spanked by my parents a few times, usually only when I did something pretty stupid. I've gotten spanked by Sonar before, too."

"Really? What's the story behind that?"

By this point, Annie and Ruby's yells had already taken on a more desperate, wailing quality, as the hairbrush spankings both built to a ferocious tempo.

Taylor forced a smile. “How about a rain check? I’ll tell you that story another time, when we’re not… preoccupied.”

Crème tossed her ears lightly. “Very well. I accept your rain check, Mister Taylor.”

The last thought that crossed through Annie Roza’s and Ruby the Roussette’s minds, before their first spanking of the night reached the climax, was that they were loved.

The End

# *Red Buns for Vanille*

Vanille the Rabbit was busying herself with the laundry. She found it strangely relaxing after a long, hectic work day.

After Annie Roza and Ruby the Roussette had gotten themselves sentenced to unofficial "community service," Vanille had accepted full responsibility for their housing and rehabilitation, including administering old-fashioned discipline. After only two days, Vanille had already administered multiple spankings to both of the trouble-making young ladies, but she had to admit: Annie and Ruby were certainly making an effort to repay their debt to society.

Then there had been the whole incident where Dr. Mechanik had brainwashed Sonar the Needle-mouse to serve him as his mindless slave, before launching a full-scale attack on Floral Forest Village and blowing up Vanille and Crème's cozy cottage.

All in all, it had been a stressful week.

Thankfully, Sonar had been restored to his former self by the power of love and friendship, and Annie and Ruby had conducted themselves admirably.

Generously, Sonar had offered the Rabbit family a place to stay, along with the rest of their friends, until Vanille's house could be

rebuilt. The neighbors had already planned a traditional 'house-raising' for next week, but until then... Vanille would have to make do. And she refused to be a freeloader.

Vanille stretched as she finished loading the next batch of dirty laundry, before noticing one last outfit from the previous load in the dryer. "Oops, there you are. Looks like is belongs to..."

Vanille pulled out one of Ruby the Roussette's infamous skin-tight outfits. There was no mistaking that absurd, heart-shaped, strapless boob armor. Vanille rolled her eyes. "Ugh... of course *this* is the one outfit that survived the house fire."

Vanille took a deep breath. "No. I mustn't judge poor Ruby. She simply had a different upbringing than most folks around here. Still, how does she expect anyone to take her seriously, strutting around with her boobies almost hanging out for all the world to..."

Vanille took a closer look at Ruby's outfit. "One-size-fits-all? Huh. Must be some kind of spandex. But it's so soft to the touch. Designed by... G.L.O. Scientific Research for Operational Combat Kinesiology? Goodness! I don't think I'm ever likely to find a bolt of *this* material for sale at the sewing shop."

Vanille's ears stood on end. She peeked through the door behind her. In the living room, Sonar, Duster, Taylor, Annie, and the entire crew from the Freedom Fighters were quietly snoozing.

Slowly, Vanille closed the sliding door to the laundry room, and held up the outfit, looking at herself in the mirror. “I wonder how it breathes?”

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Vanille took a soft breath as she caressed the smooth fabric, which lay like soft cotton against her skin. She twisted to examine her rump in the mirror, blushing slightly. “Feels like I’m wearing nothing at all!”

But as Vanille straightened, she felt her breasts jiggle, and quickly fixed her top. “Oh, heavens, what am I doing? Just imagine if Papa could see me in this absurd get-up… Though I’m sure he wouldn’t tease me too badly.”

Noticing herself in the mirror, Vanille smiled, and struck a pose. “Well… Hello there, Mister. Fancy meeting you here… Oh, this old thing? Something I borrowed from a friend… Why, yes, I *was* voted the Cheesecake Bunny Girl of the year in 2002. I’m flattered you recognize me.”

“No way? I love that issue! Can I get an autograph on your centerfold picture?”

Vanille squeaked, and pressed up flat against the mirror, as if hugging her own reflection. “Eek! Who is–”

Ruby the Roussette was standing behind her, still wearing her Catwoman-themed pajamas. Ruby held out a magazine, and flipped it open to reveal a slightly-PG image of a younger Vanille the Rabbit, coyly chewing a carrot. Vanille was wearing a skin-tight bunny-girl costume, along with her apron that proclaimed her the Chili Dog Cookoff Champion of 2002. “Gotcha! I *knew* I’d seen that apron somewhere before. You’re a celebrity!”

Vanille buried her face in her hands, blushing beet red. “Oh, Miss Ruby—please, please, please—don’t mention this to Crème and the others! I was in college! I don’t want Crème getting the wrong idea about her Dad and me!”

“And what idea is that?”

“He was a writer, and we... we *both* read those kinds of magazines for the articles! Then one thing led to another, and... I just don’t want Crème to think she ever has to use her body as a tool, just to seduce a man. If Crème ever decides to get married, I want her to marry someone who loves her as a person, not just as a piece of meat.”

“And is that what you did? Did your husband treat you like you were more than a piece of meat?”

"Of course! He... he was always such a great listener. He made me feel like I was sexy, so I wanted to be sexy... but only for him. We got married a year after the photoshoot."

"Then you have nothing to be ashamed of. I'd say you were still a great role-model, even all the way back in 2002."

"Thank you, Ruby, but please, will you promise not to show that to Crème? Some of those photos are... Well, they're simply *not* family-friendly!"

Ruby folded the magazine, and tucked it under her armpit. "Your secret is safe with me, Vanille. Still... I am a little annoyed with you for borrowing my clothes, without asking permission."

Vanille bowed her head. "Yes, that was completely thoughtless of me. I apologize, Ruby. I promise to never touch your clothes ever again."

Ruby hummed, and tapped her foot. "Hmmm... I forgive you."

Vanille sighed with relief, her chest heaving. "Thank you."

Ruby kept tapping her foot. "Though, I have to wonder: if you had caught *me* snooping around *your* intimates... what sort of conversation might we be having, right about now?"

Vanille blinked. “Well… I’d probably give you a stern talking-to, about how that wasn’t a very respectful thing to do. Um, I really am very sorry, Miss Ruby. I hope… you can find it in your heart to forgive me?”

“I already have forgiven you. My point is… it hardly seems fair. If Annie or I ever did something so *naughty* under your roof, we’d definitely be getting our bare butt spanked.”

Vanille flashed a buck-toothed smile, which failed to disguise her nerves. “Oh, but Miss Ruby, *surely* you recall when I caught Annie trying on one of your outfits? It was only yesterday! And we both agreed, Annie didn’t deserve a spanking, just for a silly mistake like that.”

“Sure. *I* agreed Annie didn’t deserve a spanking for that. But you’re older than Annie. I should think you knew a bit better. In fact, I *know* that you know better, because you gave Annie a good tongue-lashing for doing the same thing you just did… *Surely,* you recall. It was only yesterday!”

Vanille took a deep breath. “Point taken, Miss Ruby… I have not practiced what I preach. Are you… suggesting that I should do something, to make amends?”

Ruby smirked. “Well, if you ask my opinion… I think you’ve been a bad girl. And you deserve a good spanking.”

Vanille nodded, her breath shaky. “I see… And if I disagree… Can I assume everyone will know all about my shameful behavior, by tomorrow morning?”

Ruby’s smile disappeared. “What? No, no of course not! I made a promise, and that’s that. Look, why don’t you hold onto this…”

Ruby pulled out the old magazine and handed it to Vanille. “There, you keep that. Now it’s your word against mine. I’m sorry if you thought I was trying to blackmail you. I’ll just… go now.”

As Ruby turned, Vanille touched her on the shoulder. “Wait, Ruby. I’m the one who should be sorry. I’ve misjudged you… To be honest, I think I misjudged you from the very beginning. I stereotyped you as a ‘bad girl,’ based on little things. But really, you’re an honorable, courageous young woman. Really, the way I’ve been acting, I have no right to spank you.”

Ruby waved a finger. “Nah, uh! None of that self-recrimination. I was gunning for a spanking, and you had every right to spank me. You remember our agreement? I promised to trust you to be fair. That has not changed.”

“And can you forgive me, for not trusting you?”

Ruby thumbed the collar of her pajamas, and flashed a sassy smile. "Of course I can. And you *shouldn't* trust me quite yet, because I'm still a sneak. I was already planning to tease you about the magazine. I just got lucky enough to catch you red-handed. But I know you're sorry, so that's that."

Vanille shook her head. "No, Ruby. It's not enough for me to say I'm sorry. I have to be prepared to make amends... I... I will accept *whatever* consequence you believe is fair, as the punishment for my behavior."

Ruby raised an eyebrow. "Even a spanking?"

Vanille hung her head. "Yes... I think a spanking would be... perfectly fair."

Vanille shuffled her feet. "I suppose... we should wait until morning, so we don't wake the others? You can... explain the situation at breakfast, before you spank me."

Ruby giggled. "That won't do, silly! I promised to keep your secret, remember? Besides, I'm not letting you stall this spanking a moment longer. So we'll just have to continue this discussion..." Ruby held out her hand. "...in the woodshed. Come along, Mrs. Vanille."

Vanille thrilled at the mention of the woodshed. Then, she took Ruby's hand, and allowed herself to be led to her fate.

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Fortunately (or not-so-fortunately, depending on who you asked), the woodshed was completely untouched by the fire.

Ruby found the high-backed wooden chair in the middle of the room, and leaned against it. “All right, Mrs. Vanille. We will start with a hand spanking as a warmup. Then—um—you’re getting the hairbrush!”

“Yes, Miss Ruby. But I’m afraid I don’t keep a hairbrush in the woodshed. Would you like me to fetch one for you?”

Ruby glanced at the wall of implements behind her. “Oh! No need for that. We’re already here so—erm—we’ll just use one of these implements…” Desperately, Ruby scanned the wall, looking for an implement she recognized by name. “Fetch me one of the paddles, Mrs. Vanille. The biggest one!”

Vanille curtsied. “Yes, ma’am.”

Ruby felt her whole body trembling, and rubbed her hands together. This was it! Finally, it was her turn to spank Mrs. Vanille. When she’d first hatched this plan, part of Ruby had wondered whether she would be the one taking a trip to the woodshed. But this was working even better than she’d ever dared to hope!

Suddenly, Vanille appeared at Ruby's side, holding the paddle. "Here you are, Miss Ruby."

Her eyes shining, Ruby accepted the paddle. Examining it, Rouge noticed something off. "Huh? This isn't the same paddle from before? It must be twice the size! Where'd this come from?"

Already, Vanille's face looked pained. "That one... was hand-carved by my husband, as a wedding gift for me... I've never once used it on the children, but I kept it in case—well—in case, *someone* still needed a spanking, once she reached my age."

Ruby stepped back, nodding. "Fascinating."

As Ruby backed up into the chair, she almost tripped, then caught herself by sitting down roughly. "Oop!"

Ruby looked at the paddle, then at Vanille. "Ahem! Mrs. Vanille, are you ready... for your spanking?"

Vanille nodded. "Yes, ma'am. I'm ready. Will you bare my bottom before the warm-up? Or should I bare myself for you?"

Ruby clutched the paddle. "Oh! I wanna do it, please!"

Automatically, Vanille raised her hands, and held them behind her head, then took a step forward to stand directly in front of Ruby. "Yes, ma'am."

Ruby reached for the elastic waistband of Vanille's skin-tight spandex, then remembered she was still holding the paddle. Quickly, Ruby set down the paddle, then stroked her hands along the sides of Vanille's hips. "Hee, hee... Now, let's get this naughty little bunny bummy nice and bare. Turn around for me."

"Yes, ma'am."

As Vanille turned, Ruby got an eyeful of her motherly, child-bearing hips. Slowly, Ruby glided down Vanille's pants, revealing plain, pristinely clean, lilac-white panties. Hearts shone in Ruby's eyes. Then, there was a sharp clatter as the paddle fell over. Ruby yelped, and jerked down the pants the rest of the way to Vanille's knees.

Ruby spotted the paddle, and tried to reach for it, but the handle had fallen far away from her. Vanille peeked over her shoulder. "Would you like me to fetch the paddle, ma'am?"

Ruby sat up. "Yes! Um... that paddle's just going to get in the way. Where's a good place to put it?"

“I could set it under the chair for now. Or I could hold onto it for you. It will remind me of what I have coming to me next, after the warm-up.”

Ruby nodded. “That’s awesome! Now, get across my lap!”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Vanille lay herself gracefully across Ruby’s thighs, and set the paddle down on the floor in front of her. Ruby felt the full weight of the larger woman pressing down on her. Vanille was so tall, her toes reached the floor on one side of the chair, while she was forced to rest the weight of her upper torso on her elbows.

Instinctively, Ruby wrapped an arm around Vanille’s waist, then finally noticed she’d forgotten to bare Vanille’s bottom, like she’d promised to. “Ah! We will... start with a spanking over your panties. Better enjoy this while it lasts, because you won’t be wearing these undies for long!”

Vanille flicked up her white, cotton tail. “Yes, ma’am. I understand. Thank you, ma’am.”

Ruby landed a sharp clap across Vanille’s bottom, then quickly found her rhythm. Ruby raised her hand as high as she could reach, and started swinging her arm up and down in a clockwork motion. With each stroke, Ruby made a cute little grunt of exertion. She lost

count after the first ten swats or so, then wondered how many she should give. Ruby settled on one hundred as a good number, and started to count silently.

Mesmerized, Ruby took in the sight of the ripples traveling through Vanille's seat after every slap. Then, she realized she had lost count.

Ruby peeked at the exposed area under the panty line, hoping to make out a soft, pink color beneath Vanille's short, downy rabbit fur, but there were no visible marks yet.

With a smirk, Ruby patted Vanille's bottom playfully. "Well, young lady, are you learning your lesson?"

Vanille nodded. "Yes, ma'am. I'm very sorry for what I've done wrong... May I speak freely, ma'am?"

"Sure. What's up?"

Vanille's tail drooped down. "I don't mean this with any disrespect, ma'am, but... those spanks didn't hurt very much. I do feel a sting, but to make this punishment more effective, you may need to spank me a bit harder."

Ruby scowled. "I'm spanking you *precisely* as I mean to. This is just the warm-up, after all. None of that *backseat* driving. Got it?"

Ruby popped her a good one across the seat of Vanille's panties to emphasize the word "backseat."

Vanille stiffened, her tail standing to attention. "Yes, ma'am."

Ruby sniffed. "Good. Then let's have these off."

Immediately, Vanille lifted her hips, and Ruby recalled how much fuss she'd made about being bared earlier this week, when she had found herself in this exact position. As Ruby glided down Vanille's panties, she drooped her ears. Even now, she didn't feel like she was particularly in charge of Vanille. "Good girl, Vanille. You've been very compliant so far."

Unmistakably, Vanille wagged her tail. "Thank you, ma'am!"

Ruby pouted, and raised her hand high. This wasn't exactly what she'd imagined it would be like. She'd wanted to hear Vanille cry and plead, at least a little. *"It's not that I'm a sadist, it's just... I'd like Vanille to know that I can dish it out, as good as I can take it!"* she thought.

Ruby began to spank, concentrating on her delivery. Remembering her martial arts training, something clicked, and Ruby figured out what she'd been doing wrong before. Her earlier movements had been too "snappy." She needed to combine a slightly fluid swing

with her arm with a firm hand, and a graceful flick of the wrist to add just a bit more sting at the end.

Instantly, Ruby could both see and hear the difference. The claps were more resounding, and the impacts sent more reverberations through Vanille's buttocks. Vanille made a soft little noise, and clenched her glutes. "Mmf!"

With a smile, Ruby landed a solid clap at that precise moment, and thrilled as she felt the difference. Vanille had a little puppy fat, but as a rabbit, she also had some firm, lean muscle underneath the surface. Ruby was pleased to discover that her spanks were landing with enough wumph to make a deeper impression.
Ruby carried on at a brisk pace, nailing each and every swat. "Is *this* a hard enough spanking to make a lasting impression on you, Mrs. Vanille?"

Vanille gasped. "Ah! Y-yes, ma'am. Yes, please. Oof! That's hard enough!"

Ruby flashed a pouty smile. *"Hmmph!* That's not up to you, Missy. Now, hold still."

"Ow—Yes, M-Miss Ruby—Ouch!"

Immediately, Ruby increased the pace of the spanking, without letting up on the force. Ruby felt a sweat building up. This was a real workout. Vanille gasped once, then hissed. *"Sshaw!"*

Catching her breath, Ruby started spanking as fast as she possibly could. "Stop! Pretending! This! Spanking! Doesn't! Hurt!"

"It hurts! It really hurts, ma'am! I'm sorry!"

Ruby delivered the last spank, gasping for air, then examined the results. There was indeed a warm, pinkish glow covering Vanille's entire bottom, visible even through the layer of fur. "Had enough, yet?"

Vanille took steady breaths. "That... That was an excellent spanking. Thank you, Miss Ruby."

Ruby landed a hard spank smack-dab across the center of Vanille's buttocks, and let her hand linger, stroking the soft flesh. She could feel a gentle heat rising beneath her palm. "That was not a proper answer to my question. I expect a simple, 'Yes, ma'am,' or, 'No, ma'am.' Have you had enough, Mrs. Vanille?"

Vanille's bottom quivered, and for the first time since spanking began, she looked over her shoulder, to look Ruby in the eye. "N-no, ma'am..."

Ruby landed another spank. “That’s right! I believe I promised you a paddling next. Hand me the paddle, Mrs. Vanille.”

Trembling, Vanille took a shaky breath. “Yes, ma’am.”

Vanille had to slowly shift her weight to rest on her knees, then held up the paddle high over her own head. Ruby stretched to reach the paddle, and tapped it across Vanille’s bottom. The weight felt awkward in her hand. Then, Ruby brought the paddle down with a quick snap of her wrist. The paddle connected with plenty of force, but something was off. Ruby felt like her arm was in the wrong spot.

As she examined the paddle, Ruby finally put two and two together. It was meant to be gripped with two hands, like a greatsword. Ruby wanted to kick herself. “Stand up, Mrs. Vanille.”

Slowly, Mrs. Vanille stood to her full height, towering above Ruby, and put her hands behind her head. Ruby stood, and stepped back from the chair, gesturing to it with the paddle. “Since you were old enough to know better than to go snooping through my things, I think you deserve to get a full set of twenty strokes with the paddle. Any objections?”

Vanille swallowed a lump in her throat. “That’s… that’s a lot of strokes to use with that paddle.”

“Oh yeah? You gave me twenty with the paddle, the first time I was here.”

Vanille bowed her head. “Yes, Miss Ruby. But I only used the old school paddle on you… When I use the big two-handed paddle, I don’t like to give many more than six swats. Twelve at the most. It… it really lands hard.”

Ruby gripped the paddle tight in two hands. “And who decides how many strokes you deserve to get? Me or you?”

“You do, ma’am.”

“So if I say you’re getting twenty whacks, then you’re gonna take what’s coming to you. Got it, Vanille?”

Two tears dripped from Vanille’s eyes. “Yes, Ruby… P-please punish me, as you see fit… I trust you.”

That gave Ruby pause. She remembered what Vanille had said earlier, about not wanting to have to spank. Before, it had sounded like a load of baloney, but now, Ruby felt the weight of her situation.

Ruby looked at the paddle in her hands, and saw it in a new light. What if Vanille decided to spank her with this later, as a bit of revenge? *“This thing could leave bruises!”* thought Ruby.

Ruby looked Vanille deep in the eyes. “And I trust you. You will get *ten* strokes with this paddle. If you hold still, and take it well, that will be it. But watch it. If I get any trouble from you, you’ll get extras.”

Vanille exhaled sharply, and nodded. “Yes, ma’am… Thank you, ma’am…”

Ruby glanced at the chair. “In that case… assume the position, Vannie.”

Vanille sniffled. “Yes, Ruby.”

Carefully, Vanille dropped her panties, the rest of the way down to her ankles, and stepped out of her spandex pants. Then she took a steady stance, rested her hands on the seat of the chair, and arched her back to present her backside as a target.

Ruby took a test swing to get the feel for the paddle. Then she tapped it a few times across Vanille’s buttocks, gliding the rough wooden surface along the smooth furry flesh. “Are you ready for your paddling, Mrs. Vanille?”

Vanille quickly brushed her ears over her shoulder, and nodded. “Yes, ma’am. I am ready.”

Ruby landed the paddle with a full, baseball bat swing. Immediately, Vanille howled, louder than any noise she'd made so far all night. Ruby's eyes went wide as she took in the sight. She'd just flattened both of Vanille's butt cheeks like they were two pancakes. Vanille choked for air, and recited in a steady voice. "One, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am."

Ruby raised the paddle high. Suddenly, she remembered something her mom had said, before spanking her. "This hurts me, more than it hurts you."

Ruby landed the second stroke of the paddle. This time, Vanille let out a quick yelp, and bounced on the balls of her feet. But her voice was noticeably more strained. "Two, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am."

Ruby answered with a third, grand-slam-homerun-style swing. Vanille hummed, and shed fresh tears. "Three, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am."

But after she felt the fourth stroke, Vanille screamed freely. "Aaw-haaarghh! ... Oh, dear! Four, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am."

Ruby gripped the paddle tight. She felt genuinely sorry for Vanille. But she also wanted to hear some tears. Keeping her eyes on the target, she swung the paddle with extra follow-through, as if trying to knock the baseball all the way out of the park. Ruby would have

easily knocked Vanille over the chair, if the athletic, amazonian rabbit hadn't caught herself. "Owwww! Uuwaaah! *BAW!"*

And there they were. The unmistakable sound of real, unrestrained, cries. Ruby caught a glimpse of Vanille's sparkling tears as they dripped freely down to splatter on the chair. "Remember your count, Mrs. Vanille."

"Five, ma'am! Thank you, ma'am! Oh, please–"

"No, none of that whining. Look me in the eye, Vanille."

Her shoulders quivering, Vanille looked at Ruby, snot and tears dribbling down her face. Still, she managed to sniff, and steady her stance.

Holding eye contact, Ruby strolled around Vanille, and tapped the back of the chair with her paddle. "I promised you another five strokes with the paddle. That means you're halfway to the finish line. Grip the chair, and grit your teeth. I don't want you to bite your tongue. Can you do that?"

Vanille nodded, and tightened her grip. "Yes, ma'am!"

Ruby strolled back to her original position, and stroked the paddle back and forth along Vanille's bottom, then tapped to get the feel for her swing. She raised the paddle high, but didn't bring it down right

away. Ruby watched, and waited. Vanille kept perfectly still, her cotton tail twitching as she held it high. Finally, Ruby landed the sixth, shuddering blast with the paddle.

Vanille screeched, her voice cracking, and kicked up a leg behind her. Then she quickly set it down. “Six, ma’am. Thank you, ma’am. I’m sorry.”

“Sorry for what?”

“I’m sorry for kicking, ma’am.”

Ruby hummed, then tapped the paddle across Vanille’s lower bottom, pressing it gently against her upper thighs and sit-spots. “Should you get a few extra strokes, for kicking?”

“I… I normally don’t give extra strokes for flinching, unless it’s for rubbing, or leaving the spanking position entirely. I try to be understanding.”

“That’s not what I asked. Should *you* get extras, for kicking?”

“I… I don’t… Yes, ma’am. I deserve extras. I’m old enough to know better.”

Ruby started to tap Vanille gently, at a steady rhythm. “And you were doing so well… If I give you extras, that will bring you up to twelve, at least. You’re not even at the halfway point, anymore!”

Vanille hunched her shoulders. “Yes, ma’am.”

*Tap, tap, tap.*

Ruby smiled. “One last question, Vanille. Do you remember when you put me across your knee, right here in this woodshed, with a bar of soap in my mouth?”

“Yes, Ruby. I remember.”

“Are you the least bit sorry for doing that, now that you find yourself in this position?”

Vanille shook her head. “No, Miss Ruby. I believe I did the right thing.”

“Hmm, I agree. The point of a spanking is to teach the spankee a lesson. And I think I’ve learned a thing or two from you already…”

Ruby pulled the paddle away from Vanille’s bottom. “Spanking’s over, Vanille.”

Vanille glanced over her shoulder. “But, you promised me at least ten strokes!”

“I did. But I’ve reconsidered. You’ve let me off the hook early a couple times, when you could have kept whaling on me. I don’t want to spank you anymore, Vanille. It just wouldn’t feel fair to you. Therefore…”

Vanille’s face brightened, before Ruby snapped her arm, and pointed at the spiked chair. “I’ll just put you in time-out. Go find your seat, Mrs. Vanille. You know the one I mean.”

Vanille’s ears drooped, her lip quivering. “Yes, Miss Ruby.”

Gracefully, Vanille stood. Walking a bit stiffly, she strode to the spiked chair, and sat herself down with poise, folding her hands in her lap. Vanille pursed her lips once, then exhaled.

Ruby glanced at Vanille’s feet, which were resting firmly on the floor. “Nice try. Feet up on the first rung of the stool. Rest your full weight down on that naughty, big bottom of yours.”

Vanille’s eyes popped open. Scowling, Vanille gripped the sides of the stool and lifted herself up, pouting petulantly. Then she slapped her bottom down flat against the spikes, and winced. “Ooch… Oh, fuuuh… Fudgesicles!”

“Careful. Do I need to wash your mouth out with soap, old lady?”

Vanille flashed her buck-teeth in a grimace. “*Old* lady?”

Ruby shrugged. “Older than me, I mean. I was about to say, ‘young lady’ but I was worried that would offend your pride.”

With an effort, Vanille took her hands off the stool, and crossed her arms. Despite her stoic expression, Vanille was clearly struggling to endure the spikes. “Thank you. I accept your compliment to my dignity.”

“Now, where’d we leave that bar of soap?”

Vanille went stiff as a board. “But… I didn’t use naughty words!”

“I dunno. ‘Fudgesicles’ is pushing it.”

Slowly, Vanille raised her feet up to the second rung, wincing as she felt her weight shift, and settled back down. “I left the soap with the cleaning supplies by the workbench… Would you like me to fetch it for you?”

Ruby flashed her bat fangs. “No need. I want you to keep your truck parked right there. Think hard about what you did, to earn this treatment.”

Vanille nodded. “Yes, ma’am. I promise you, I’ll never so much as touch one of your outfits, for as long as I live.”

“Hold on. I *didn’t* say you can’t borrow one of my outfits. I got a thousand of those old things from G.L.O.’s surplus store. Heck, you can keep that one, if you want.”

Suddenly, Vanille remembered exactly how much her outfit was leaving to the imagination, down to the square inch. “Oh, I couldn’t possibly... Besides, what occasion would I ever have to wear something this *bold?”*

“On your next hot date?”

Vanille shuffled on her seat. “Oh, I’ve thought about dating again, but... it’s a lot harder as a single mother. For one thing, I refuse to date a man who couldn’t be a good father to Crème. I will not allow boyfriend troubles to disrupt Crème’s childhood.”

“So that means you kind of have to land a Prince Charming, in one go?”

“Exactly... Or, at least, he has to be a good man, first and foremost. I’m not that picky about looks.”

Ruby examined the sight of Vanille, enjoying the picture of penitence she had painted. “Hmm... Well, I hope you find a bona

fide, tried-and-true Prince Charming. If you do, I'll be sure to give him a demonstration of how to properly handle a strong-willed gal like yourself... I think you definitely benefit from the *firm-handed* approach."

Vanille bowed her head. "I... I really do, actually. Thank you, Ruby. It's been a long time since I had someone who could take me to the woodshed."

Ruby flew across the room to put away the paddle, and landed back in front of Vanille. "Me too... My mom used to take a *chancla* to the seat of my pants, when I was being a brat. That was the last time I got spanked, before I met you."

"May I meet your mother, Miss Ruby? I'd love to compare notes."

"Oh... That's a bit... complicated. I love my mom, it's just that... the spankings were always a bit of a sore spot for me. See, the last spanking I got was at age sixteen, and... I was not happy about it."

"I'm sorry. Forgive me for prying."

"It's okay. Mom and I patched things up. She was a good Mom, she's just a tad... hectic. See, she was the one who trained me for my first job."

"Really? What field?"

“Safe cracking. We used to have a mother-daughter jewel heist together every Friday, right after preschool.”

Vanille blinked, twice. “Oh… That makes so much more sense, now. Well, if you’re ever comfortable introducing us, the offer remains open.”

Ruby beamed. “Thanks, Vanille. I don’t think I’ll be washing your mouth out with soap. You may leave time out now… And you may rub your bottom, if you want. Spanking’s over.”

Vanille shot to her feet, and caressed the injured area. Then, there was the sound of a rooster’s crow, and a beam of sunlight spilled through the sun-shaped window carved in the door.

Vanille froze. “It’s morning? But… that means everyone will be up and at it by now!”

Ruby peeked through the window. “Not necessarily. Maybe they all decided to sleep in for a few—”

Crème’s voice called from outside the door. “Mommy? Oh, Mother, where are you? I want to help cook breakfast for everybody!”

Vanille slapped her face. “Nooo! If Crème sees me like this…”

Suddenly, she noticed her pants and undies and raced to find them. "... I'll just die of embarrassment!"

Ruby waved her hands. "Stay calm! Once she heads back to the Donut Lord's house, we can just sneak back—"

There was a sharp knock at the door. "Miss Ruby? Mother? Are you in there?"

Vanille was struggling to pull on her panties.

Ruby looked at the look of despair in Vanille's eyes, and sighed. "Crème? It's me, Ruby. Could you give your mom and me a few minutes? I'm not, um, *decent* at the moment. And your mother... She's gotta give me a spanking. Please, I don't want you to... see my bare bottom."

"What? Already? It's the crack of dawn! How did you manage to earn a spanking already?"

Vanille pulled up the spandex pants, struggling to fit her behind back into them. "Nuh–never you mind about that, Crème. Ruby has asked you to give her some privacy. Now, what do you say?"

"Yes, mother. My apologies for disturbing you, Miss Ruby. I'll go get breakfast started. Don't worry, Mother! I'll remember not to turn on the stove until you're there to supervise!"

Vanille yanked up her pants, then looked down at her wildly immodest, femme-fatale outfit. It was a minor improvement. “See you soon, Crème! ... Um... Miss Ruby...”

Vanille held up her hands. “It’s time for your spanking!”

Then, Vanille started clapping her hands vigorously. Ruby frowned, before she realized what the plan was, and started pretending to cry. “Ooh! Owwie! Ouchie-wa-wa! Um–I’m sorry, Mrs. Vanille–I’m a bad girl!”

They kept up the act for another few moments, until Ruby saw Crème was gone, and gave Vanille a thumbs up. “We’re clear! Let’s get you home and dressed!”

“But, how? If Crème’s already up, then everyone else must be–”

“Just follow my lead. Keep an eye out for corners, and stay out of the line of sight of any windows. And... go!”

“What? Now? Can we count to three?”

“Three!” Ruby burst out the door, and slid along the side of the woodshed.

Vanille squeaked, and followed at a sprint, mimicking Ruby's every step. Vanille whispered. "Are we sneaking in through the window?"

"No good. Leads right to the kitchen. The straightest shot is through the front door."

"But that will take us past the living room!"

"No. We gotta go *through* the living room, remember?"

"What? Why do you have my neighbor's floor plan memorized?"

"You always got to scope a new place out for possible escape routes, Vanille. Now, on my signal... three!"

Covering her face in her hands, Vanille sprinted after Ruby, straight for the front door. "Not ready! Not ready!"

A neighbor's front door opened, and Honey the Squirrel spotted two people sprinting past her. "Huh? Who's running around in their pajamas this early in the morning?"

Honey's mother appeared behind her, wearing a bathrobe. "Honey? What are you doing outside in your pajamas?"

"I saw two weirdos running around outside, in *their* pajamas!"

“Honey... Are you telling stories?”

“No, ma’am.”

“Then who was it?”

“I dunno. She covered her face.”

“Huh. Must be some of those big-city kids playing pranks. Streaking, or some sort of nonsense. Let’s get you some breakfast. After that... you and I have another appointment at Mrs. Vanille’s woodshed!”

Honey sighed, and dropped the seat of her pajamas to examine her bottom, which was still slightly pink from last night’s bedtime spanking. “Yes, mother.”

After getting caught red-handed playing Peeping Tom, all three members of Honey’s troublesome trio had been sentenced to receive three maintenance spankings a day, every day, for the next three weeks.

Patting her bottom with both hands, Honey smiled slyly. *“Still worth it,”* she thought.

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Ruby and Vanille burst inside Sheriff Tom's house, and slammed the door behind them. Vanille was hyperventilating. Ruby held up a hand, made a few quick signals in sign language, and snuck off.

Vanille did a double take. "What? What does..." Vanille imitated the sign language wildly. "... *that* mean?"

Rouge held a finger to her lips. *"Shush!"*

"Don't you shush me while I'm talking to you, young–"

Ruby pressed her finger hard against Vanille's lips.

Then, Annie Roza and Princess Susie Apricorn walked right past the living room doorway in their pajamas, stretching. Annie yawned. "Mrs. Vanille? Are you up? We want to help make the boys breakfast in bed."

Crème called from the kitchen. "Mom's in the woodshed. Miss Ruby is getting another spanking, I'm sad to say."

Princess Susie narrowed her eyes. "What? Already? What kind of trouble could Ruby have possibly gotten into?"

Annie answered in a deadpan tone of voice. "Well, I suppose bats *are* nocturnal. But then, how'd Vanille catch her so fast?"

Crème giggled. “That’s exactly what I wondered. But Mother told me I need to respect Ruby’s privacy, so that’s exactly what I’m gonna… Oops. I shouldn’t have mentioned this at all, should I?”

Vanille whispered. “It’s no use! There are too many of them!”

“Courage, Vanille. Just follow my signal.”

“Which signal? You mean ‘three’?”

“No, I mean–” Ruby made three silent hand gestures.

“But what does that even mean?”

“It means… When *I* do *this*… *you* haul ass to the laundry room.”

“Miss Ruby, there is absolutely no need for that sort of crass language.”

There was a whir of heavy gears and pneumatics as Bonnie the Cyborg-Hare stomped toward the kitchen. “Morning, y’all. Land sakes, is Princess Susie in the kitchen? We barely survived her last attempt to cook breakfast.”

Susie harrumphed. “Hey! I know how to cook… I mean, I could make a salad.”

Ruby flailed her arms, making dozens of new signs in quick succession. Before Vanille could complain, Ruby held up three fingers, and bolted into the living room. Vanille followed, shielding her eyes as she crossed past the kitchen.

Just as they reached the entrance to the laundry room, Sonar the Needle-mouse woke up, and kicked up and out of bed, landing right in front of them. *"Yawn!* Oh, man, did I have a weird dream. I had to give a speech, but I didn't have any clothes on. Talk about embarrassing!"

Sonar pulled on his two white gloves. "There. It's okay, ladies, now, I'm fully–"

Sonar saw the laundry room door slam shut in front of him. "... dressed?"

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Vanille donned her modest formal dress in record time. Ruby held the door shut. "Okay, we made it... Good work, Vanille."

Vanille finished tying her sash. "Thank you, Ruby. I owe you a great debt."

Ruby shrugged. "Eh, you let me off without a spanking in the woodshed this morning. I'd say we're even, Vanille."

Vanille bent low, and kissed Ruby on the forehead. “I will never forget your kindness. One last thing... Remember to refer to me as ‘Mrs. Vanille’ when we’re in front of company.”

Ruby blinked. “Oh... of course. I’m still doing community service.”

Vanille patted Ruby on the shoulder. “Yes... But when it’s just you and me... Please, call me Vanille.”

Vanille pressed something against Ruby’s chest, and patted it gently. “And thank you... for spanking me.”

Ruby looked down, and saw that Vanille had returned her copy of the magazine. She opened it up to the centerfold, and sure enough, Vanille had written her signature.

The End

# *GOOL-Power:*

Or:

## *Bobo Bilby Gets a Whuppin' on Her Wumpas*

### Part I: The Bilby Family

Once upon a time, in the lush rainforests of Insanity Island, there lived a bilby named Bash. He was a fun-loving and adventurous creature who loved to run and jump around the island, always seeking new thrills and challenges.

Despite his lack of verbal communication skills, Bash had a knack for expressing himself with his signature catchphrase, "Woah!" It was his go-to word for almost everything, from expressing excitement to showing concern.

One day, while exploring a mysterious temple deep in the jungle, Bash stumbled upon a talking magical mask named Akua. The mask explained to Bash that he was a powerful talisman that had been entrusted to protect the balance of the island's magical energy.

Akua sensed that Bash was destined for greatness and decided to become his mentor and guide, helping him navigate through the

dangerous terrain of the island and thwarting the evil plans of the island's primary antagonist, Dr. Hippo Campus.

Bash was not alone in his quest to save the island, as he had his clever little sister Bobo by his side. Bobo was a genius with computers and gadgets, and her technical expertise proved invaluable in defeating Dr. Campus' minions.

Together, Bash, Bobo, and Akua embarked on many adventures to save their island home from the clutches of evil.

They had become a family, and though their adventures were perilous, they had grown closer together as a result. And as for Bash, he continued to explore the island, shouting his favorite catchphrase all the way: "Woah!"

End of Part I

## Part II: Bobo Gets Into Trouble

Things had been going well, and Bash had almost collected all the crystals and gems he needed to defeat Dr. Hippo Campus, but Bobo Bilby was growing impatient. “It’s not fair! Why should Bash get all the fun?”

Ignoring Akua’s warnings to stay home and wait to offer Bash back up, Bobo had snuck out of her room and made her way to Campus’ headquarters alone. With her trusty computer skills, she had managed to hack into the security system and was sneaking around, trying to find a way to take him down.

As she was making her way down the hallway, two bodyguards, Croco-roo and Teeny the Tiger, appeared out of nowhere and captured her. Bobo struggled to break free but they were too strong.

“Hey, let me go! I'm not afraid of you two!” Bobo yelled.

Croco-roo chuckled. “Oh really? You should be, lass. You've broken into our boss's property and that's not something we take lightly.”

Teeny growled in agreement. “Boss will teach you a lesson, little girl!”

Suddenly, Dr. Campus' face appeared on a nearby TV screen, sneering. “Well, well, well. Look what we have here. A little Bilby trying to play hero on my turf.”

Bobo glared at the screen. “I'll stop you no matter what!”

Dr. Campus laughed. “Oh, I doubt that. But for now, my dear Croco-roo and Teeny will have to teach you a lesson about respecting other people's property.”

Bobo's eyes widened in horror as Croco-roo stepped forward and grabbed her arm, smirking. “Hold still now, lass. This will only hurt for a bit.”

“Lemme’ go!” protested Bobo. With his free hand, Croco-roo slapped Teeny over his thick skull to get the brute’s attention, then handed the struggling Bobo over to a confused Teeny to hold.

“What are you doing?” cried Bobo.

“Yeah, what Teeny doing?” rumbled the huge tiger.

“Just hold on, both of ya, and you’ll see!” smirked Croco-roo.

As Teeny grasped each of Bobo’s Teeny hands in his huge paws, Bobo heard a resounding slapping sound coming from behind her.

Craning her neck, Bobo caught the sight of Croco-roo cracking his lizard-like tail against the floor, raising a cloud of dust.

"There, now dat I'm stretched out, lemme teach you how we handle naughty little ankle-biters down under... on *your* down under!"

In horror, Bobo saw Croco-roo wind up his tail, and knew exactly what he was aiming for...her behind! Instinctively, she turned away from Croco-roo to face Teeny and shut her eyes tight, bracing for the impact.

*CRACK!*

Bobo felt her legs kick up at the force of the impact, dangling in mid air as Teeny held her aloft. Even through her overalls, she could feel the sting and the rough texture of Croco-roo's scaly hide.

Dr. Campus laughed maniacally as Croco-roo began to wallop Bobo. "Ha ha! This is hilarious! Croco-roo, give her everything you've got! Make her regret ever crossing my path!"

She grit her teeth and tried to stay tough, but the slaps were becoming more and more painful with every passing second.

Croco-roo grinned mischievously, relishing in the moment. He swung his tail with force, delivering stinging strikes to Bobo's

already sore bottom. She clenched her fists, determined to withstand the pain, but tears welled up in her eyes.

Dr. Campus watched with twisted satisfaction. “Croco-roo, you have to hit her harder!”

Croco-roo complied, increasing the intensity of his strikes. Bobo struggled to hold back her cries, her resolve wavering under the relentless punishment.

“She’s a tough little nipper. Hey, Teeny, put her down for a tik.”

Finally, it was over, or so Bobo thought. Just as her sneakers touched the ground, Bobo had just enough time to clutch her throbbing bottom, trying to rub the sting away through her jeans, when Croco-roo’s claw snatched her by the wrist again. “Hey! No rubbing! Teeny, you keep holdin’ her. My tail is sore.”

Ignoring Croco-roo’s warning, Bobo continued trying to rub the fiery sensation away with her free hand, when she had a lightbulb moment. “Your tail is sore? So, that means you can’t spank me anymore, right?”

Croco-roo nodded, too distracted by his smarting tail to pay proper attention. She could hear Campus laughing uncontrollably, but he wasn’t on screen. He must have collapsed in fits of giggles, literally “ROFLMAOing” (Rolling On the Floor Laughing his Ass Off).

Seeing her chance, Bobo looked back to Teeny and fixed him with what she hoped was an authoritative, motherly gaze. “You hear that, Teeny? Croco-roo says his tail is sore, so he can’t spank me any more. No more spanking.”

“No more spanking?” repeated Teeny, straining his brains hard to remember a sentence with more than two words.

“Yes, Teeny! No more spanking. Well, my tail is sore too, so you can’t spank me anymore.”

“No more spanking!” mused Teeny, obviously pleased with himself for understanding these complicated instructions.

But a disturbing thought was bouncing around in Teeny’s skull. Something didn’t seem right. “Wait! Teeny listen to Doctor Campus. Teeny listen to Croco-roo. You not boss of Teeny!”

Seeing her chance at escape slipping from her fingers, Bobo decided to make an all-or-nothing gambit. “You don’t believe me? Ask Croco-roo! Hey, Croco-roo! Your tail is sore, so no more spanking, right?”

Bobo was greeted by the half-disgusting, half-amusing sight of Croco-roo nursing his tail like a mother cooing over a baby with a boo boo. “Wuh? Yeah, sure, sure. Tail is sore, so no more spankin’!

There, there, tailey, you did a good job. Lemme' kiss and make it better!"

As Dingo smooched his own tail, Bobo turned back to Teeny to sell the deal. "See! Croco-roo says, 'No more spanking!'"

For an eternal moment, Bobo looked into Teeny's vacant eyes as he tried to process this information. Teeny blinked one eye, and then the other. This seemed to signal that his calculations were complete. "Croco-roo say to Teeny... No more spanking. Okay!"

With a grin of triumph, Teeny lowered Bobo to the floor and released her. Teeny raised his paws and roared with pride. "Teeny did it! Teeny am good listener!"

Bobo made a dash for the exit, clutching her bottom with both hands as she sprinted. "Holy Wumpa! That actually worked!"

The grating sound of Dr. Campus' laughter faded away from Bobo's ears as she reached for the latch of the nearest door, the world slowing down to a crawl around her!

But as the frozen moment dragged on, Bobo suddenly realized that it wasn't the stress and adrenaline making it feel like time was frozen around her. She was *actually* frozen in midair.

Bobo hadn't just imagined the sounds in the room fading away. Dr. Campus had actually stopped laughing, and wiped the tears of mirth away from his eyes just in time for his massive brain to assess the situation and activate a hidden stasis ray turret from his computer terminal.

"You idiots! Troglodytes! Missing links! You nearly let her just walk away from you?"

Pulling his smooching lips away from his own tail, Croco-roo snapped back to reality. As he looked back and forth between the beaming Teeny, Bobo frozen in midair, and a furious Dr. Campus chewing him out on the TV screen, Croco-roo lacked the intelligence to fully comprehend the situation.

But he had just enough brains to know what to do next. "Croikey! I got the girl!"

Bobo saw Croco-roo charging towards her, until he smacked his face flat against the ball of energy that was holding her frozen in midair.

Dr. Campus slapped his gloved palm against the giant letter on his forehead. "No, you dingo-dullard! I got the girl for you. And lucky you, or I'd be having my fun with you and Teeny instead of with her!"

"Teeny like fun!" added Teeny, helpfully.

“Well, good news, Teeny! Your dearest Docty-wockty has some more fun planned for you!” Adjusting levers and buttons on his control panel, Dr. Campus aimed the beam of the stasis ray so that Bobo was slowly dragged into the grasp of Croco-roo.

Bobo's heart sank as Croco-roo nestled himself on one of Dr. Campus' endless supply of workbenches, just knowing that a second round of spanking was coming.

Ruefully, Bobo wondered if Campus liked to keep these work benches spread around his fortress in case the desire to do some mad science or some Bilby spanking struck him at any given moment.

Sure enough, Croco-roo pinned her across his lap, and the freeze ray finally deactivated, so that she slumped across his knee like a helpless ragdoll.

Croco-roo barked an order at Teeny, who to Bobo’s amusement was still standing in triumph, under the assumption that he had done a very smart thing in letting her go.

*“Well, at least I gave it my best shot. I used my head, not that it’s going to help my seat,”* thought Bobo.

Bobo's heart began to race when she felt a tug at her overalls digging into her shoulder. With an impatient jerk, Dingo yanked at her pants roughly until Bobo undid the single strap holding them up.

As Bobo's overalls tumbled down to her sneakers, she found herself wondering why she had just done that. "*I shouldn't be helping this guy. Then again, the idiot might have tugged until he ripped the button off my favorite overalls.*"

"Oh, my *science!* Would you look at that? She wears underpants with coding language on them! How adorable! Is that a LISP language?"

"It's GOOL, you ghoul," mumbled Bobo.

Campus doubled up in another fit of wheezing giggles. "Ah, I see. They have 'GOOL Power' slapped across the center. How droll. Too bad they won't be the only thing slapped across your bilby-booty today!"

As Bobo felt all eyes in the room on her computer-themed panties, she suddenly remembered Akua's strict warning to her before he and Bash left to fight Dr. Campus.

***

"Stay here, and stay safe, my child. Your bruddah and I have some dangerous work to do!"

“No fair! Why does Bash get to go?”

“Bash is older than you, and Tawna is in trouble. Bash will have enough trouble without having to babysit his kid sister.”

“So you’re just leaving me here because I’m a girl?”

“Yes, I am leaving you here because you are a girl. A *little* girl. When you are older, there will be plenty of time for you to help Bash, and you can start helping right now by figuring out Dr. Campus’ computah things. I got no idea how they work.”

“Well, I should come along in case you need me to get you past Dr. Campus’ computer systems!”

“Oh, so you’re tellin’ me you can’t figure out these computah things right here from home?”

“Well, of course I can but—”

“Then no buts! You can do the thing you do best right here, where you’re safe, and Bash and I can do what we do best, which is breaking things.”

“Woah!” Bash added, confidently.

“But—”

“No more buts, Bobo, or it’ll be your butt gettin’ spanked. I don’t have any hands of me own, but I love you kids like you were me own. And I’ll give Bash permission to do the honors if you don’t obey.”

As Akua looked to Bash sternly, Bash bounced back and forth with his tongue sticking out. Using his wooden face as a blunt instrument, Akua whacked Bash over the head sharply. (Well, technically, Akua’s entire body *was* a wooden face.)

Bash shook his head like a wet dog drying off, and responded with a “Whoa?” and a hand gesture that unmistakably said, *“Spanking?”*

“Yes, Bash. If Bobo disobeys, you’ve got to spank her. I don’t like it, but dems da rulez.”

Bobo had pouted and unconsciously folded her hands behind her to partially cover the seat of her pants. It wouldn’t have been the first time her older brother Bash had assumed a paternal duty for her.

Bash looked back and forth from Akuaku to Bobo seriously, before giving a thumbs up and his most serious, “Woah!”

It occurred to Bobo that despite Bash’s goofy demeanor, he didn’t miss much. He was such a great listener, too. Bobo swallowed at the

thought of being spanked by the best big brother in the entire world.

Satisfied that Bash understood his duty, Akua returned his attention to Bobo. “If you want to show me you’re old enough to help, then help us by obeying and doing what you can do best: figuring out these computah’ things.”

Bobo pouted and huffed, but she couldn’t come up with an argument. She knew that technically, Akua was right. Cracking Campus’ system could take weeks, she had everything she needed to do the job right here in their hut, and running off to beat up bad guys with Bash probably would distract her from that job, but still...

Coco muttered under her breath, “Why should Bash get all the fun?”

Akua lowered his thick, colorful eyebrows seriously. “Bobo, are you gonna’ do as I ask? I want your promise.”

Bobo sighed, and blew her hair out of her eye with an angry huff. “Yes, sir.”

Bobo had meant to keep her promise. She really did. But it turned out that Dr. Campus was pretty inept when it came to network security. His strong suit was building giant death lasers, not coming up with strong passwords to secure his giant death lasers.

After creating a sock puppet email account, Cocco successfully phished Dr. Campus' private data on her first try. Her email read: “ATTENTION! Does your MASSIVE brain give you a SMARTING headache? [CLICK HERE] for a FREE FREE FREE sample of Head On (TM), Applied DIRECTLY to the FOREHEAD!”

And so, Bobo the Phishing Master had nothing left to do but sit around the house. Could Akua really blame her for wanting to test her findings in the field? It wasn’t really disobeying, was it? Maybe disobeying the letter of the law, but not the spirit of the law, right?

***

As Bobo reflected on this question, Teeny raised a paw into the air. It had taken a while, but Croco-roo had successfully been able to communicate the concept of: “Teeny spank Bobo’s butt with paw!”

Dr. Campus watched with twisted delight, his sinister grin widening. "Show her no mercy, Teeny! Let her feel the consequences of her foolish actions!"

As the punishment began, Teeny and Croco-roo taking turns slapping Bobo’s tush at a steady rhythm, it occurred to Bobo that Teeny was sort of the same but sort of the opposite of Bash.

She imagined trying to explain all her fancy reasoning to Bash, but inside she knew how disappointed Bash would be that Bobo had broken her promise and ran away. She imagined how, unlike Campus and his mooks, Bash would take no pleasure out of spanking her.

Croco-roo and Teeny changed up their steady pattern of taking turns by slapping each of Bobo's cheeks together in unison once, before returning to the old one-two, one-two rhythm.

Bobo distinctly heard Teeny humming the tune of "pattycake, pattycake, baker's man," to keep up his timing.

*"The only thing I can do is try to talk my way out of this!"*

With a pang of guilt, accompanied by a pang of pain from both cheeks, Bobo suddenly felt that she deserved what was about to happen to her. Getting spanked by these two brutes couldn't possibly be as terrible as letting down Bash.

*"No. There's no talking my way out of a spanking this time. But I can still stall for time!"*

Bobo craned her neck to look at the TV monitor, and managed to gasp out defiantly between spanks. "Hey! *Owch!* Dr. Campus? *Oouch!* Are you a fan of—*Yowch!*—coding?"

"Oh, don't worry, Miss Bilby, there will be plenty of time to interrogate you about how you hacked my systems after we have our fun," crowed Campus, as he applied his free sample of Head On directly to his forehead.

"So, what's—wah*Oow!*—the interrogation going to be? M-more—*WOAH!*—More spanking?"

Dr. Campus stroked his goatee dramatically, holding the stick of Head On like a cigar between his fingers to try and look cool. "Well, um, yes, I suppose. We haven't really had time to get the interior decorator in to install a proper torture chamber. This lair is sort of a fixer-upper. But who needs a torture chamber when we can just spank you stupid?"

"Wuh—*HELL!*—W-well, that seems like it would get boring after a while, don't you—*YOW!*— donchya' think?"

"If you're bored, I could always take over. You may think Teeny and Croco-roo are good spankers, but they're just a warm up. My niece Nina could provide you with *smarting* testimony that Dr. Hippo Campus is the most fearsome spanker on earth!"

"Oh no, not for me! *YEE!* I mean, for you! *HOO!* Don't you want some more variety? *WHOOP!* Surely a mind as expansive as yours can't stand something as repetitive as just watching me get spanked—*AHOW!*—s-spanked by these two clods. I doubt they

have the intellect to appreciate the subtleties of this sort of thing. *YIKES!"*

"I'm a busy megalomaniac, Miss Bilby. I could always amuse myself with a few doomsday weapons while they carry on with your spanking in the background. It's like relaxing music to me. Helps me concentrate. So unless you have any suggestions..."

Campus waved his hand in a way that silently told Croco-roo to carry on with the punishment. This was, of course, too subtle for Teeny.

Croco-roo elbowed Teeny to get his attention, and Teeny responded by wrapping a claw around Croco-roo's throat with enough force to make the Australian chimera's face puff up like a balloon.

They were only stopped from dropping Bobo and fighting each other by a tirade from Dr. Campus.

Bobo was thrilled at her ability to stall for time, but she knew she was losing Campus' interest. Eager to avoid another telling off, Teeny and Croco-roo renewed their efforts to spank Bobo silly, like good little minions.

Gritting her teeth, Bobo ignored the flurry of spanks as best she could. "Do your worst, Campus. *Ack!* I'm more afraid of a spanking from Bash Bilby than I am from you, and do you know why? *Aah!*

Because he wouldn't stop at spanking me over my overalls, or even over my adorable, lucky, computer-coding geek girl panties. *WAAH!* No sir! When he finds out that I disobeyed and went after you alone, he'll be spanking me over my bare—*OH!!!*—My bare, Bilby butt!"

Just as Campus was about to turn away to enjoy an evening of doomsday science accompanied by relaxing Bobo Bilby spanking ASMR to help him relax and concentrate, he stiffened. "Oh, dear! Who would have thought that goody-two-shoes Bilby could be capable of such barbarity? Well, don't worry dear, consider me your own personal Bilby child protective service agent. I'll never let that brute of a Bilby lay a hand on you ever again!"

"I'm not the one who needs protection from Bash! *YOW!* You are! And when Bash spanks me—*HEEE!*—I-it isn't abuse! Bash will only teach me a lesson because I deserve it and because he loves me—*YEEE!*—Something that you'll never understand!"

Croco-roo paused dramatically to await instructions from Campus. The moment was spoiled when Teeny landed another smack, unable to process anything other than "spank Bobo."

Dingo kneed Teeny to get his attention and pointed to the TV where Dr. Campus' face blazed with silent fury. As Teeny's massive paw hovered menacingly in the air, Bobo's body tensed, her mind filled with a mixture of fear and determination. She knew she couldn't take much more without breaking down crying.

“Well, Miss Bilby, since you love that dullard Bash so much, I’d hate for you to feel homesick. Croco-roo, bare her bottom, so that she can feel right at home with us too! I’ll be down momentarily to show you two dullards how to give a proper hiding. In the meantime, keep her warm for me. You know I can’t resist a couple warm hot cross buns fresh from the oven!”

Bobo knew that this was coming. She had tried the old “Br’er rabbit in the briar patch” trick on Campus, and Bobo pictured her rear end landing directly on that briar patch.

Dutifully, Bobo lifted her bottom into the air a few inches so that Croco-roo could unceremoniously tug down her lucky GOOL-Power panties. As the cotton brushed against her sensitive backside, she felt a prickle. Underneath her thick, orange and white fur, Bobo knew her bottom must be red and swollen already.

Teeny growled, his eyes fixed on Bobo’s quivering tail. Without hesitation, he brought his massive paw down, the impact echoing through the room. Bobo let out a stifled cry, feeling the sheer force of the blow.

With each subsequent strike, the room seemed to shake. Dingo seemed determined to prove that he could be nearly as good as Teeny in the muscle department.

Bobo's body jolted forward with each punishing slap, tears streaming down her face. The pain intensified with each strike, making it harder for her to maintain her composure.

The latch clicked on the metallic door and it slid into the wall with an echoing din. As promised, Campus had arrived to add the personal finishing touch. His laughter echoed through the room, his sadistic delight unabated.

Bobo clenched her fists, refusing to give Dr. Campus the satisfaction of breaking her spirit. She gritted her teeth, determined not to let out a cry, but the pain seared through her, threatening to shatter her resolve.

But just as the punishment seemed unbearable, it stopped.

“That’s enough, boys! She needs to learn her lesson, and I’m just the one to learn her!”

“Teeny think proper grammar be ‘teach her,’ not ‘learn her.’”

Gasping for breath, and ashamed to feel tears streaming down her cheeks, Bobo lifted her head  to face Campus. His hand was raised in a halting gesture that even Teeny understood meant, “Shut up, Teeny.”

“Now, my butt-hurt little Bilby, I recollect that you claimed you were more afraid of a spanking from Bash than from me? Well, I’ve never lost an argument on the internet, and I’m not about to lose one in real life either! Now, what empirical proof could I possibly offer to persuade you that I am, objectively speaking, a superior spanker?”

Bobo shrugged. “I suppose you could spank me?”

Campus rolled back his head with laughter until he bent over with a stitch in his side. “I like you, Miss Bilby. Once you learn the proper respect, you’ll make a much more useful slave than any of the abominations I’ve cranked out of the genetic modification lab over the past few years, your brother included. Now, if I tell Dingo to let you down off his lap, will you try to run away like a naughty girl, or will you come to Daddy Campus like a good girl and let papa spank?”

Bobo weighed her options, and a plan formed in her mind. If she made a run for it now, Teeny and Dingo would be after her in a heartbeat.

But Campus was away from his control board and inviting her over his lap. If she put the twerp into a headlock, she could use him as a hostage and make her escape. But would he be looking for a move like that? Letting him spank her would be unpleasant, but it might lull him into a false sense of security.

As Bobo looked deep into Campus' soulless, sadistic eyes, she understood him. He was a man who was going to enjoy spanking her, and would probably do a thorough job of it. He wanted to prove something to her, that he was the stronger man than Bash or some macho nonsense like that. And Bobo silently made this mental calculation:

*"I am going to let this man spank me because it's my best chance to stall for time and get close to him...*

*"I am going to let this man spank me because he thinks he's better than Bash and I don't want to give him the satisfaction of watching me run away...*

*"I'm going to let this man spank me and play the scared, sorry little girl, just like he wants...*

*"And then, I am going to get up off his lap, put this dork in a rear chokehold, and walk out of here."*

Bobo widened her eyes into what she hoped was a convincing "whipped puppy dog" expression. "P-papa? You mean, you're my father?"

"Well, not technically, but as your creator I suppose I might be considered your legal guardian, and I like to think of myself as a tyrannical, overbearing father to all my subjects!"

"I-I've always wanted a daddy. Please, oh please! Let me serve you as your loyal daughter!"

Campus' shriveled chest swelled to its fullest extent. "Well, after the disappointing loss of Dr. Embryo, it would be nice to have another computer geek around to keep me company. Someone who could appreciate the sophistication of my plans for world domination. I suppose I can take you on as a probationary servant. Once you prove your usefulness, and your loyalty, I might even come to think of you as a worthy successor one day..."

Casually, Campus stroked his spindly goatee. "But of course, *if* I could possibly be persuaded to be your, ahem, 'Daddy,' as you so charmingly put it, I expect your full obedience and gratitude first. And you can start by marching your tail over here and accepting your punishment like an obedient daughter should."

"Yes...Papa!" Stifling a few choice words that were not rated E for everyone, Bobo folded her hands meekly in front of her and approached Campus. She noticed that her "GOOL Power" panties were dangling from one foot.

“None of that ‘Papa’ stuff, yet. You will refer to me as ‘Dr. Campus’ and ‘Sir’ for now. We’ll discuss adoption after I take over the world. It will make the paper work so much simpler!”

“Yes, Dr. Campus, sir.” Bobo internally swallowed her screams of unbridled fury as she lay across Dr. Campus' lap.

“And let’s tuck these away somewhere safe. Wouldn’t want you to lose your lucky underpants, would we?” teased Campus as he plucked them off her foot and folded them nicely on the floor where she could see them.

She imagined the mechanics of the chokehold. She’d sit up, pretend to cry in his lap (though she might not need to pretend), gently put her arm around his head as though wanting to hug him, and...

*WHAMMO!*

Dr. Campus landed a firm swat on Bobo’s backside with his gloved hand. He was not as strong as Teeny or Croco-roo, but Bobo had enough time to appreciate that he wasn’t just bragging about his experience as a spanker.

Teeny and Dingo had sort of waved their arms and slapped their palms against her rear like they were trying to swat a wasp. But Campus aimed a well-placed spank on the center of her bottom just below her cheeks.

Angling the stroke upward, Campus produced a resounding clap, and thought about the beauty of Newtonian physics as the impact reverberated through Bobo's bottom in ripples.

Nonchalantly, Campus let out a puff of hot air to warm up the palm of his glove. "See, boys? This is how it's done!" With that, Campus landed a series of quick, firm strokes, one on Bobo's left cheek, then her right, then again in the center. As the last one landed with a reverberating crack, a lot of things suddenly happened at once.

A cacophony of Bashing sounds reverberated throughout the room. At the exact instant Campus' palm landed on his target, Bash Bilby had burst into the room, kicking down the metal door with a tornado attack.

On Bash's face, he wore the mystical mask Akua, who chanted a war song.

But because this all happened in one instant, Teeny, Croco-roo, and Campus all assumed that the loud sound they heard was the resounding clap of a spanked Bilby bottom.

Bobo knew her moment had arrived. Twisting off of Campus' lap, and spraining his wimpy wrist that couldn't hold her down, Bobo hooked her left arm around Campus' neck and used her leverage to stand up and pull Campus off balance.

Empowered by the magic of the mask, Bash barreled into Teeny the Tiger in a flurry of fists and feet. *"WOAH!"* [Translation: "Leave my sister alone!"]

Dr. Campus' face twisted with rage and disbelief. "No! How did you...?!"

But Bobo's judo reflexes didn't give him time to finish. Hooking her free hand into Campus' belt, she lifted the mad scientist off his feet and threw him bodily to the floor.

Bobo heard a screech of protest from the bad doctor, and felt a scream of protest from her spanked bottom, as she sat on his back, but she ignored it.

Fighting through the pain, Bobo pinned Campus' right arm and lifted it up backwards, pinning it tightly between her legs and arms as the little man squealed like a girl.

Campus managed to get a glimpse of a furry, well-spanked Bilby backside before it slapped against his face and rolled over him, followed by the snap of his arm.

In close combat martial arts, one's rumpus is often an essential weapon in the midst of a rumpus.

Bash and Akua fought valiantly, their combined strength overwhelming Teeny. It was Croco-roo's turn to be confused. "Dr. Campus? What should I do? I think Bash is invincible until the mask—" Croco-roo was greeted by the sound of Dr. Campus crying like the little bitch he was as Bobo cannonballed directly onto his back. With no help coming from that direction, Croco-roo turned to Bash, thinking if he could only pry the mask off, he'd have a chance.

Bobo seized the opportunity amidst the Chis. Summoning all her courage, and plopped her weight down onto the distracted Croco-roo's tail.

Unfortunately, Croco-roo whipped his tail around his body to find the source of the trouble. "Bugger! Leggo me tail, sheila!"

Bobo held on for dear life, and had just enough time to process that she had lost her panties and that her bare bottom was hanging out, when her and Croco-roo's eyes met.

Not quite knowing how else to get her off, he aimed his hand instinctively on the nearest target of opportunity.

*SPANKO!*

Of course, the nearest target of opportunity was her ass. I mean, what else did you expect?

It was too much. Tears in her eyes, Bobo clutched her poor bottom with both hands and slid off the tail.

“That’ll teach ya, ya saucy c–” before Croco-roo could finish a distinctively Australian curse, Bash Bilby came Bashing into his face.

With Croco-roo getting thoroughly trounced, Bobo turned her attention back to Campus, who was stumbling back onto his feet to make a hasty retreat. She darted forward and launched herself at him, delivering a swift kick to his back that sent him careening through the open door and down a conveniently placed bottomless pit.

When Bobo turned around, she was greeted by the sight of Bash whipping Croco-roo around by the tail before defenestrating the Aussie through one of Dr. Campus' overly decorative stained-glass windows. (If you’re curious, it had Campus' face on it before Croco-roo’s face went smashing through it.)

Teeny woke up long enough to see this defeat, and at a ferocious glance from Bash, Teeny helpfully threw himself out the window after Croco-roo.

Finally, the room fell into a momentary stillness. Bash approached Bobo, his eyes filled with relief and concern. He held out his hand

gently and uttered a “Woah!” full of love and forgiveness. Bobo accepted it, her heart swelling with gratitude.

"Bash... I love you," she managed to say through her tears, her voice filled with a mixture of exhaustion and affection.

Bash pulled her into a warm embrace, his arms encircling her trembling frame. “WOAH!” [Translation: I love you too, Bobo! I'm just glad you're safe], he whispered, his voice filled with genuine relief.

Bobo wiped away her tears, before shifting her attention to the red marks on her bottom. She gently massaged the lingering sting, finding solace in the fact that she was finally safe with her family.

Just then, Bobo had a moment of dawning comprehension. “I don’t have any pants on!”

Frantically, Bobo snatched up her lucky GOOL-Power panties right where Campus had tidily left them. She danced a little as the elastic snapped into place across her swollen, fluffy, puffy posterior.

Just as Bobo was retrieving her blue overalls, she heard Akua’s deep, baritone hum. “Bobo, you know you shouldn't have come here alone. You broke your promise. You disobeyed. We could have lost you to Campus forever!”

Bobo looked down, feeling ashamed, “I know, I'm sorry.”

Bash looked at Akua for guidance, unsure of what to do.

The mask clicked his wooden tongue. “Tsk, tsk! Bobo, you need to learn from your mistakes and not take foolish risks like this again. See dat wooden crate over there? Go assume the position so Bash can give you the spanking you deserve.”

Bobo nodded. “I understand.” She obediently placed her hands on the crate, feeling a mix of shame and regret. “I'm sorry, Bash. I just wanted to help... But I shouldn’t have broken my promise to you. No excuses for that.”

Bash sighed. “Woah.” [Translation: “It's okay, Bobo. I'm sorry I have to do this.”]

He rubbed her back for a moment before wrapping his left arm supportively around her waist and raising his right hand to spank her. Bobo flinched as his gloved hand made contact with her bottom at a careful, almost gentle pace, and she started to cry softly.

Bash never spanked Bobo all that hard. But Bobo hadn’t lied to Campus either. She wasn’t afraid of the pain. She had been afraid of the disappointment.

Akua nodded his approval. “Okay, Bash, I think Bobo’s been spanked plenty for one day. Let’s go—”

Hotly, Bash and Bobo both flashed Akua a look that shut him up.

*“WOAH!”* they both said together, before Bobo translated. “Bash is the one who’s in charge of spanking me, Akua. I’m sorry for breaking my promise to you, too, but the spanking I got from Dr. Campus and his grunts doesn’t count as my punishment. In fact, I refuse to dignify it as a spanking at all. Only Bash has the right to tan my hide, and I want to let him do his job.”

Bash nodded an affirmative, “Woah!”

“I see. Forgive me for interferin’, Bobo. I can see this is important to ya. Just know that I forgive ya. All right, Bash, finish what ya started.”

Bobbing his head, Bash returned his attention to his most important task.

Bobo looked back at him, with fierce determination. “Bash, earlier, I told Campus that when you got me home, you would give me a spanking on my bare bottom. Don’t make me a liar!”

Hooking her thumbs into either side of her gamer-geek-girl undies, Bobo lowered them to just below her bottom. This was how she and

Bash always did it at home. It helped Bobo participate in her punishment and practice discipline.

Now that Bobo had been spanked by someone other than Bash, she was suddenly appreciative of this little detail from their routine.

After Bash and Bobo exchanged another, “Woah!” of agreement, Bash released his left arm from around Bobo’s waist and began the final spanking of Bobo’s long day with a tornado-like flurry of quick spanks with both hands.

Bash didn’t spank hard, but he did spank long. After a few minutes of peppering, Bobo’s fierce determination melted into uncontrolled, plaintive sobs.

After a few final smacks to Bobo’s lower thighs, Bash stopped and hugged Bobo tightly. “Woah!” [Translation: “You were very brave, Bobo. But please don't ever put yourself in danger like that again”], he said, his voice filled with concern. Bobo hugged him back, feeling grateful for her brother's love and protection.

“Thank you, Bash. And I'm sorry,” she said, as she snuggled up next to him.

Bobo wiped away her tears and examined the red marks on her bottom in her reflection on the TV screen Campus had appeared on earlier while tormenting her.

Although the fur on her bottom was thick, the red glow actually shone through it. She tried to rub the sting out, but it was completely futile. So, she put her panties and overalls back on, relieved to finally be safe with her family.

Akua smiled, “All is forgiven, my children. Let's go home.”

With every step, Bobo felt a sharp twinge from each cheek. She found it strangely comforting, like it was a little reminder that she was finally journeying home.

When she and Bash approached one of Campus' bottomless pitfalls, Bash lightly scooped her up in his arms and hopped across it. When they landed, Bobo noticed he didn’t put her back down, and didn’t protest.

She let Bash carry her all the way home, and found she had dozed off in his arms. She awoke just as Bash was laying her down on her bed, careful to lay her down on her side so her sore bottom never touched the mattress.

“Best big brother in the whole wide world,” mumbled Bobo, dreamily. As Bash laid a blanket over Bobo, she drifted right back to sleep.

The End